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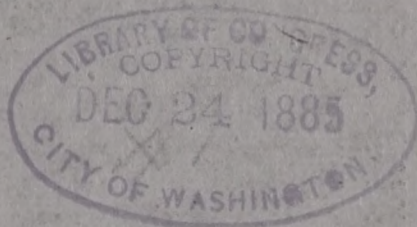
DECEMBER 25, 1885

Subscription Price
per Year, 52 Numbers, \$15

Entered at the Post-Office at New York, as Second-class Mail Matter

THE BACHELOR VICAR OF NEWFORTH

40
A Novel



BY MRS. J. HARCOURT-ROE

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DR. JOHNSON

NEW YORK
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1885

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THE BACHELOR VICAR OF NEWFORTH.

INTRODUCTORY.

A MAN in the prime of life, of good birth, fair means, great intellectual power; in good health, in the height of popularity; courted, flattered, run after; accessible to all, both rich and poor; ever doing good; full of vigor, life, earnestness, and courage; head and chief and sole governor in his parish; ruling every one, yet at the same time beloved, admired, respected, praised, and considered by every one. Such was the Rev. Theophilus Manley, Vicar of Newforth.

Under the burning rays of a tropical sun, in an arid desert country, a worn, solitary, travel-stained man, his eyes bright with feverish fire, his hands bearing the marks of toil; without food, save a cake or two made by the filthy hands of black men from the coarsest grain; without friends, without a single companion; without clothes, save those he stood up in; without money, without reputation, without hope, without faith. A man forsaken by all, and, it seemed, forsaken by his God. With a mind wrought up to such a pitch of unnatural activity, through bodily weakness, that thought coursed through his brain with a merciless rush; his ideas dwelling ceaselessly on the various branches of theoretical philosophy—more especially on the highest, treating of the essences of things eternal; on sciences, on art, on poetry, but finding pleasure in none of them; with a rich and gorgeous imagination, distorted and strained; with a soul full of pain and grief; with a body a stranger to any physical comfort; without consolation in the past, without prospect in the future. Such was the Rev. Theophilus Manley, ex-Vicar of Newforth.

And after?

CHAPTER I.

MR. MANLEY'S ARRIVAL.

"OH dear, oh dear, oh dear!" These words were spoken by the Rev. Theophilus Manley, M.A., as he stood in front of the parish church of Newforth, in company with Mr. Leslie, the Vicar's warden.

"You may well say, 'Oh dear,'" replied Mr. Leslie; "the church is a disgrace to the town."

"The fabric of the building is well enough, and the site is beautiful. How came the church in such a state of neglect and decay?"

"The late vicar was eighty years old, long past his work. No one saw to anything, no one cared about anything."

"But did not you—the congregation—care?"

Mr. Leslie smiled.

"My dear sir, my experience has told me that where the root is dead, the branches will die. An earnest vicar makes an earnest congregation. Did we care? Speaking frankly, I don't think we *did* care, but it is still possible that we may."

Mr. Manley looked around him. The churchyard was choked with weeds and rubbish, piles of timber were suffered to rest against the base of the tower, the walls were dirty and discolored.

Inside, matters were worse. There was not even common cleanliness. Mould and mildew broke out in large patches; most of the stained-glass windows had been broken and replaced by squares of common glass; the really handsome carving over the chancel was defaced, the pews were getting rotten, the church furniture was deplorable.

"This is shocking," said Mr. Manley, as he, with a quick glance, took in the various details.

"Well," replied Mr. Leslie, cheerfully, "I suppose it is. But, after all, it is so precious little that any of us are in church that does it matter very much?"

Mr. Manley did not enunciate his views on this point; he smiled and said, "I feel on the subject, only perhaps more strongly, as a colonel of a regiment would do if he saw his men on parade in rags and tatters, or the captain of a ship were his vessel dismantled and dirty, or as you perhaps might feel, Mr. Leslie, if the law courts were a living scandal; but I cannot expect you to look at these matters with my eyes"—he paused, and looked straight at the warden—"at present."

"Or ever," returned Mr. Leslie, amicably; "and I cannot help saying that if you accept this living and come to Newforth, I pity you, sir—that is to say, for the first year, at least."

"Is *nothing* going on in the parish?"

"There is nothing; I cannot say these things are in my line, and that personally I care much."

The prospective Vicar looked at Mr. Leslie—a tall, handsome, energetic-looking young man. "I will make that man care soon," he thought.

"After all," continued the warden, "as I said about the church, does it matter much? Granted that we don't meddle with the amount of beer and tobacco consumed by the working man, that we don't regulate his literature and pry into his sanitary arrangements and order his amusements—I dare say he is very much obliged to us for *not* interfering. If I choose to give a beggar sixpence, I may, and enjoy the feeling that I am doing a good action. Here we have no

charity organization to tell me I am committing a crime by so acting, and to sift all our characters for us before we can get a bit of bread to eat. Why," said Mr. Leslie, energetically, "should not a poor woman require assistance when in deep poverty because, perhaps ten years ago, her husband stole three pennyworth of apples?"

"You are entering upon a very wide subject," said Mr. Manley, laughing; "and as I do not happen to entirely agree with you we will not discuss it at present. Suppose we go and see the vicarage instead."

The gate on the south side, that nearest to the vicarage, was locked. Mr. Manley tried to open it in vain.

"The key is lost," said Mr. Leslie; "has been lost for the last twelvemonth. We don't trouble ourselves to repair damages; we are such a happy-go-lucky parish, you know."

Mr. Manley put his hand on the top, and vaulted over. Mr. Leslie followed his example.

"I suppose that wasn't very clerical," said Mr. Manley; "but no one saw me, and it will save time."

Mr. Leslie laughed; he thought he should like a man who could jump over a gate.

"What a beautiful view of the harbor and shipping you have here!" said Mr. Manley; "the church, being on a hill, must be quite a sea-mark."

"It would be, if the spire were built," returned Mr. Leslie.

"Why do you not build it?"

"We build it—we do anything? My dear sir, we are stagnant, we are dead; there is only one thing we glory in, and that is the dignity of our dulness."

"How long has the church been built?"

"Fifty years."

"That spire shall be built before two years are over," thought Mr. Manley.

"You would like to see the vicarage before making up your mind," said Mr. Leslie, leading the way to a moderate-sized but not uncomfortable house, standing in a small garden. From the back windows an extensive view of the sea was obtainable.

The furniture left by the late vicar was plain but neat, the carpets were somewhat worn, but everything was in fairly good order.

"I suppose I can take all this at a valuation," said Mr. Manley.

"Is it good enough?"

The prospective Vicar laughed. "It is quite good enough for a bachelor, and I have no idea of taking a wife."

"We do not want for young ladies here."

"I like young ladies," said Mr. Manley, with a smile; "but I don't want a wife."

"Higgledy piggledy, needles and pins,
When a man's married his trouble begins,"

quoted Mr. Leslie, with a glance to see if the other were scandalized. But, on the contrary, Mr. Manley did not appear at all scandalized. He laughed.

He was a slight man, rather over middle height, with a well-built, athletic figure. He had a well-shaped, close-cropped head, dark hair, clean-shaven cheeks. His broad, square brow, straight, fine nose, and delicately cut, though firm, mouth conveyed an impression of great intellectual power, combined with the keenest quick-witted common-sense. He was thirty-five years of age, but in the distance did not look more than twenty-five, and on a near view not more than twenty-eight.

"I have made up my mind to accept the living," he said, at length; "and I should now like to ask why every one spends less time in this than in other churches?"

"To begin with," replied Mr. Leslie, "we lacked opportunity. I dare say, in these Newman-Pusey church-revival days, it won't be believed that this church was open only on Sunday morning, and once in a long way in the evening. When Mr. Smith first came he used to give out, 'There will be no service this evening, as I have a cold in my head, or an ache in my little finger.'"

Here he saw Mr. Manley looking at him with some gravity. He continued somewhat hurriedly,

"I really can't remember his exact words, you know; it was so long ago. But gradually all excuses were given up, and it became an acknowledged fact that the church was only open once on the Sunday and never on the weekdays, unless some great man wanted his baby christened. Nothing so *infra dig.* as having your child christened unless you have the place to yourself obtains in Newforth! Oh dear, no!"

"If lack of opportunity were the only reason—"

Mr. Manley was here interrupted by the warden,

"I am afraid not the only reason."

"That reason," continued the prospective Vicar, cheerfully, "can soon be done away with. Is the church well attended on Sunday morning?"

"Well attended!" echoed Mr. Leslie, who seemed to take a certain pride in the dismalness of the situation. "The church holds twelve hundred people, and we think ourselves lucky if four hundred come."

"Where do the people go?"

"Anywhere, or more probably nowhere. Some few to chapel, still fewer to more distant churches."

"We will get them back. It should be the pride of the parish church that her people do not care to go elsewhere."

Mr. Leslie shrugged his shoulders.

"I am afraid you are going to undertake a herculean task."

"I am quite aware there will be difficulties, but we can only try to surmount them. You must help me, Mr. Leslie; my church-warden is my right-hand man."

"I?" repeated Mr. Leslie, scarcely believing his ears; "I assure you I am no use whatever; I do nothing, or next door to it."

"We will make you of use," said Mr. Manley, laughing.

"You can't make me do what goes against the grain, sir."

"By no means ; we shall go *with* the grain."

"I doubt it," returned the church-warden ; "you had better look out for a better man than I."

"How do the people amuse themselves?"

"Do you mean by the people the working man?"

"I do," replied Mr. Manley.

"Where have you come from, sir?" asked Mr. Leslie, almost in a tone of injury. "Did you ever know the British workman amuse himself otherwise than in the public-house?"

"I certainly have," replied Mr. Manley, briskly.

"Then I have *not*. Beer, skittles, a fight, and a summons—these, I take it, are the British workman's amusements. I am quite content that they should be. I am not a philanthropist, and if I were I should not move. For every time a gentleman laughs a working man 'on the spree' will laugh twenty times: *ergo*, he is the happier of the two, or if he isn't he ought to be. He doesn't care if I play billiards, and I don't care if he gets drunk—so long as he is quiet."

A look of gravity again overspread Mr. Manley's countenance, which the church-warden quickly perceived.

"Notwithstanding my heathen sentiments, Mr. Manley, will you dine with me to-day and be introduced to my wife? We might take a walk in the interval, as it is her 'At Home' day, and I am sure you don't want to meet all the ladies that are now drinking tea."

"Many thanks! I shall be most happy to dine with you another day," said the Vicar, his bright look restored; "but I must now return to town. Good-bye, and I shall hope to see you again soon."

Mr. Leslie's house stood in its own grounds, some five minutes' walk from the church. He was a man of means and taste; both garden and house were in perfect order. He stood in the hall, and listened to the clatter of teacups and clash of tongues. A tall, handsome, dark-eyed girl caught sight of him through the open drawing-room door, and joined him.

"I am rejoiced to see you, Mr. Leslie," she said, energetically.

"I am equally pleased to see you, Miss Hatton; so glad you're glad, and all that sort of thing, you know; but what is my special attraction at this present moment?"

"Do you see those people in there?"

"Yes—how on earth am I to shake hands with them all?"

"Oh, never mind that; they have been here more than two hours, and during the whole of that time there has been one everlasting subject of conversation. I'm so glad to see you, because I think there may now be a reasonable prospect of its coming to an end."

"What is the subject?—scandal of some sort, I presume."

"Not a word; it would have been infinitely more amusing to have listened to something ill-natured (we are so fond of our best friends, you know), than to have heard one continuous stream of praise."

"Praise of whom?"

"The subject has been the supposed—and no doubt invented—perfections of the proposed Vicar, Mr. Manley. I quite dislike him in consequence, before I have even seen him."

"I wouldn't be the proposed Vicar for something. But I will tell you a great secret. He has accepted the living, and is coming here as soon as possible."

"How do you know?"

"I was with him at the church this afternoon."

"Were you?" exclaimed Miss Hatton, her eyes sparkling. "Oh, *what* is he like?"

"I declare, you are as bad as the rest; I thought you were sick of the subject. He was—well, he was like a clergyman."

"Don't be so provoking. Is he handsome, and does he look nice and clever?"

Mr. Leslie laughed.

"I am not going to make my information too cheap. I shall forcibly change the subject. Now, doesn't our drawing-room look exactly like a china-shop? It always reminds me of a hall surrounded with kitchen dressers, which are covered with crockery ware. My wife will have plates and cups in every imaginable place, even above the portière."

"It is such beautiful china," returned Miss Hatton; "I always admire your drawing-room so much, and it is so well-proportioned."

"It is well-proportioned enough, I grant you, and it costs me a good sum of money every year, in order that I may live up to it, furnish it with its requisite plants, and so on."

As he spoke, a vision of the dirty, neglected church rose before him; somehow his conscience accused him. He thought of Mr. Manley's words, "We will make *you* of use," but he shook his head over them.

His wife looked up, and beckoned to him.

"I must go now, Miss Hatton, alas! but I will tell you the news soon."

He wended his way slowly through the tea-drinking groups, and stood beside Mrs. Leslie, a pretty woman of some eight-and-twenty, with dark curly hair.

"How late you are, Frank!" she said, in a low voice.

"It is a most extraordinary thing, my dear; but in spite of the attractions of these halls of dazzling light on your 'At Home' days, those are the days in which I invariably find myself late. Can't account for it anyhow! No wonder you are glad to see me. What a bore it must be for you women to have no men to talk with. I wonder an air of resigned boredom doesn't pervade the whole assemblage."

"You are too bad, Mr. Leslie," said Miss Ethel Hatton, an exceedingly pretty, soft-mannered girl, bearing no resemblance to her sister. "We have all been very happy without any gentleman."

"Am I too bad? Then I will make my peace. I hear you have been talking all the afternoon about the new Vicar."

"That is quite true. We hear he is charming, and, besides being a good man, has brilliant abilities; that he took every prize at his school, and every kind of honor at Cambridge; that he was Senior Wrangler; and, in short, I don't know what he wasn't."

"All I can say is," returned Mr. Leslie, "that he did not talk one word of Latin or Greek to me, and—he jumped over a gate."

"What an extraordinary thing for him to do! Tell us something more."

"Don't you think I ought to make my information public?" A curious expression of mischief overspread his face as he continued,

" 'There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood—' "

Mrs. Leslie interrupted him. "We have heard that quotation before, Frank!"

"Without a doubt, but not in connection with myself. I now see my way to becoming famous through the medium of another, by the reflected light of the new Vicar."

"What do you mean?"

"You shall see."

He procured a high footstool and stood on it, then rapped with a teaspoon on the table to secure the attention of his audience.

"Ladies," he began, solemnly, "unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, yet the importance of my subject must be my excuse for thus exposing my feeble oratorical efforts to your trenchant, your brilliant, criticism."

"What *are* you about, Frank?" said Mrs. Leslie.

"Ladies," he continued, "prepare yourselves for one of the most startling announcements it is in my power to make. Although we in this town of Newforth boast of a large population, of scores of gay villas, of numberless bright roads and streets, of a mayor and corporation, of an esplanade and sea-wall, of a brass band (which, in parenthesis, some people have the bad taste to wish further), of a parish church—and *such* a parish church!—of several chapels, of some eminent lawyers, of whom I am the greatest—in fact, were it not for my natural modesty, I might describe myself as the glory of Newforth)—by the way, where was I?"

"Where were you, indeed!" said Mrs. Leslie.

"Ladies," he continued, "time would fail me were I to enumerate all the attractions of Newforth; but one advantage we have not had of late—we have *not* had a Vicar. Having now opened the subject with, I trust, becoming gravity, I will now make the announcement which will, I trust, fill your minds with wonder and delight. Prepare yourselves, calm yourselves, I beg. *I have seen the new Vicar; further, he is an unmarried man!*"

A burst of laughter followed this speech, not so much at its substance as at the ludicrous manner in which it was delivered.

"Tell us some more," said Miss Hatton, who had re-entered the room long since.

"With pleasure," he said; "the statement is so amazing that I beg to assure you I am speaking truthfully—he said *he liked young ladies!*" and Mr. Leslie sat down.

"Do talk a little sense, Frank," said his wife; "did you like him or not?"

"I liked him very much."

"And what do you think of him as a Vicar?"

"I think he seems a very good sort of fellow; but I *know* that he is all there."

CHAPTER II.

CRITICISM.

THE congregation, more numerous than usual—but, alas! the scanty congregation—had mostly assembled in unwonted good time in the churchyard, for Mr. Manley was to take his first duty that morning.

There were Admiral and Mrs. Hatton with their daughters; Miss Hatton brilliant in gray, with dashes of crimson; Miss Ethel fresh as a daisy, in white—it was a bright June morning and the sun was shining hotly—and talking to them were Mr. and Mrs. Leslie.

"I really think we ought to go in now," said Mrs. Hatton; "it is almost eleven."

"I wonder if Mr. Manley will be punctual," said Mrs. Leslie; "don't you remember poor old Mr. Smith used to saunter down the road at a quarter past eleven, stopping to talk to every one he met."

"And making those of us who were punctual in a state of exasperation past description," said Miss Hatton.

"We will give the new Vicar the benefit of the doubt, and go in," said Mr. Leslie. "Not but what the old system had its advantages, because we could be, and nearly always were, late. I have a dim sort of idea that the church-wardens ought to be in the vestry before the service and after; what do you say, Admiral Hatton?" turning to his co-church-warden.

"I know nothing at all about it," answered the people's representative—a fine, hale old man, with white hair and a jolly-looking, though withal somewhat fiery, countenance.

"I really wish some one would tell me my duties, if I have any duties," said Mr. Leslie. "In poor old Smith's time every one did that which was right in his own eyes, but I am somewhat afraid that this man will keep us up to the mark. I hate to be kept up to the mark. Ah, there are the Allens;" as a stout lady of a rather forbidding countenance entered the church, accompanied by her son and daughter. "She loves the chief places in the synagogues, and has accordingly signified her intention of taking the front pew. They have only lately come to Newforth. She is a rich widow, whose husband lived in Chili."

"We really must go in," said Mrs. Hatton.

They had barely taken their seats when the clock struck eleven, and, punctually to a moment, the new Vicar came forth from the vestry alone, for a surpliced choir was a thing unknown in Newforth.

His quick glance took in at once the rows of expectant and inquisitive faces. In that one brief survey he could have told within

twenty how many people were in the church. He shortened the service considerably. By twenty minutes to one the congregation were dismissed.

"I must say this is a great improvement on Mr. Smith," said Mr. Leslie; "he used to go droning on till long past one; but with this corresponding advantage—we never listened to him; our minds were in a state of beautiful repose. I'm afraid we sha'n't be able to help listening to this man. How did you like him, Miss Ethel?"

The girl's face lit up.

"I thought it was admirable," she answered, simply.

"What, the sermon? There were no grand words in it that I heard."

"Indeed, no; but it was so quiet, so peaceable, so earnest, so plain, so logically constructed—and, above all, so heartfelt."

Mr. Leslie felt inclined to laugh—the thoughtful look on her face deterred him.

"Yes, it was certainly logical; he had something to say, and he said it—which is more than many men know how to do. There is nothing easier, with a certain amount of education, than to string together a number of high-sounding phrases, which, taken collectively, mean nothing; and to preach what may pass muster, with people whose culture stops short at a certain point, as a most eloquent sermon. I could do it myself."

Ethel laughed.

"Yes, you may well laugh at the idea of my preaching, but I couldn't give you a sermon such as we have just had. I dare say Mr. Manley took a vast deal longer to prepare it than if he had talked about the Astounding Realities of the Transcendental. And I should say no man knew better than he exactly how much, or rather, how little, such phrases are worth."

"He has a very beautiful voice," said Mrs. Leslie.

"Don't you think it's a little melancholy?" asked Miss Hatton, joining them.

"Oh, no," returned Mrs. Leslie, warmly; "it is so full of feeling. It is the voice of a thorough gentleman. There are two points which no half-and-half man ever has, a really refined voice and good hands—by which I do not mean white hands."

"Can't we change the subject?" said Mr. Leslie; "we have had a very good dose of 'Vicar' as it is. Let us take a turn on the cliffs."

He led the way across the green to the cliffs rising from the beach. On the pier below the townspeople were walking to and fro.

"This is very nice," remarked Mr. Leslie, looking at them and the shipping; "it gives me quite a benevolent feeling, as if I were a public benefactor, without the bother."

"How much better it is to shorten the service," said Mrs. Leslie; "one can attend far better, and one doesn't find one's self wishing it were over. I hope the Vicar will be equally judicious with the other services."

"Vicar again!" replied her husband; "I shall call out 'Taboo' whenever his name is mentioned, for I really can't stand much more

of it. Here is Campbell," as a young naval lieutenant approached. "Now, Miss Hatton, I will leave you, and with sorrow resign my post in his favor."

CHAPTER III.

MISS ETHEL.

It was a magnificent morning when Mr. Manley left his house at six o'clock, for his usual swim from the rocks round the point. The sun shone in his eyes as he leaped from stone to stone; the blue sea was washing and eddying at his feet, filling the pools, and murmuring a delicious little soothing melody. Out seawards two fishing-boats were making their way to the next village on the coast.

His swim over, the Vicar threw stones into the water and sang in the very joy of his heart. How could he be otherwise than joyful on such a morning? He walked slowly along the beach towards a little fishing-cove; the houses, numbering some five or six in all, were built on the beach. The fishermen were mending their nets, their boats drawn up on the shingle, crab and lobster pots were scattered about on the sands. A little girl of some five or six years of age had pulled her father's red cap over her head and eyes, and was stumbling about among the pebbles some hundreds of yards away from the houses. Suddenly she fell, striking her knee sharply against a rock. A loud cry ensued.

"Hullo!" said Mr. Manley, cheerfully, and taking her in his arms as he spoke, "what is the matter?"

The child stopped crying out of sheer surprise, and pointed to her knee. The Vicar sat down on a rock, saying, "Let me examine the wound—I will be the doctor."

A few scratches appeared on the surface of the skin. He took a small surgical case from his pocket, and cutting a strip of plaster placed it on the little girl's knee, telling her a wonderful story the while about a giant.

"I think," he continued after a little while, "that we now require a cake plaster. Do you know what that is?"

The child shook her head.

"Cake plasters are the most wonderful healers of children's wounds and sorrows, but unfortunately I do not carry them in my pockets. I wonder if a penny would have the same effect."

"Now, does it hurt you to walk, dear?" he asked, kindly.

The little girl took a step or two, but screwed up her brown face with an expression of pain.

"Don't try," said the Vicar, lifting her again in his arms; "I will carry you home. Whose little girl are you?"

"There is father," she replied, pointing to one of the fishermen.

"I will take you to him. Now, you have been a brave little girl, and this penny is yours."

The child's eyes sparkled with pleasure; she pushed back her sun-

bonnet and gave the Vicar a hearty kiss, which he returned in quieter fashion. The fisherman, a bronzed, stalwart man of forty, left his nets and advanced to meet them.

"Thank you kindly, sir, for picking up my little maid; she's a heavy weight to carry."

"I will recruit myself by sitting down and having a little chat with you, if you will continue your work," said the Vicar, with a smile, taking a seat as he spoke on a boat turned upside down. A chip of wood lay beside him; he took it up and began to carve a grotesque figure with his penknife for the child's amusement.

"You have chosen a very pretty spot to live in," he said; "I have never been so far before. Those cliffs at the back of your houses would make a charming sketch. I must come and pay you all a visit soon."

"Glad to see 'ee, sir," returned the man, heartily; "we don't see many folk here; this is a lonesome little cove."

"What distance are you from Newforth?"

"Not above two miles, sir; but we are out of the way, like. Many people don't know there is a house here."

"Indeed! I suppose these rocks shut you in. And how do you fare in the winter?"

The fisherman shook his head.

"It is lonesome, sir, as I said; the Newforth folk don't know whether we be alive or dead."

"If *my* company will be appreciated, I shall be most happy to bestow some of it on you; I think I must make a point of coming out here once a week." As he spoke, he made a note in his pocket-book.

"You are out early to-day, sir."

"I am always out early in fine weather. I have been swimming round that buoy," pointing to a black object some half-mile out.

"Lor'!" said the fisherman, in amazement, "I never knew any one like you could swim."

"Do you know who I am?"

"I suppose you be a minister of some sort; I thought they was always at book-learnin', or jawin' at people."

"I am the Vicar of Newforth," rejoined Mr. Manley, with a smile; "and I trust when I come to see you I shall do very little in the 'jawin'' line."

"No offence, sir; no, I don't think you will. Any little ones of your own, sir?" as the child ran up and perched herself on the Vicar's knee.

"No; I am not a married man, but I am very fond of little ones."

He put a few queries as to the number and names of the inhabitants of the cove.

"And whose is that cottage which stands farther back than all the others, beneath the shelter of the cliff?"

"That belongs to Mrs. Stevens; she is a respectable body. Her husband was drowned last year, and she has no children."

"Poor soul! she must indeed be lonely."

"She lets lodgings in the summer; her rooms are small, but they are neat and clean."

Without knowing why he did so, the Vicar made a note of this information also, little thinking of the sad fruit it would one day bear. Four men came down to the sands, dragging a boat with them, and calling to the father of the child. Mr. Manley spoke a few kindly words to them, and went his way.

Ascending the cliff by a circuitous path he turned his back on the sea, and looked down on Newforth. He could see the streets, the villas, the tall buildings, the chapels, and, above all, he could see the poor, neglected, parish church, which he was now closely connected with, and which he had made up his mind to love.

The buoyancy of his spirits left him. As he looked at the town a grave and solemn mood came over him, for he was one of those rare clergymen whose whole heart and mind and soul are in their work. A great dread came over him as he thought of the thousands of people living so near, and of the neglect and indifference which had eaten into their very soul. But there were far worse than neglect and indifference, there were active agencies for evil. How now to counteract these influences? What was he, single-handed, to do?

He remembered the night before his ordination, when the responsibilities he was going to take on himself had wellnigh appalled him, when the thought that he might personally have to answer for the souls of those committed to his charge had all but caused him to refuse to take these vows on himself at all. But never since he had been ordained had these responsibilities seemed to press on him so heavily as now: he was about to undertake a fight, as it were, against overwhelming numbers. But being a man of indomitable will and great courage, and possessing, moreover, the strongest faith in the personal providence and direction of God, his heart did not fail him now.

Although he had been so short a time in Newforth he had already perceived that his congregation did not pull together. To use the words of one of the society papers, with regard to a similar congregation, "Every one thought that nearly every one else was a '*person*,' and although they might be compelled to associate with one another in a better world, they wished to see as little of one another as possible on the road."

Long and earnestly did the Vicar revolve in his own mind how the existing state of things was to be altered, for—oh, most rare clergyman!—he had a strong idea that brotherly kindness was a virtue enjoined not only on the rich, in connection with the poor, but was also one that ought to be practised among the well-to-do themselves; and that, when it did not exist, it was the parson's duty to call it into being. That he must get his people not only to sympathize with, but to work with him, he knew full well, being quite aware that in all matters, temporal as well as spiritual, the pie in which one has had a finger has a totally different flavor to that made by a strange cook; and although he did not deal at the Stores he had a great respect for the virtues of co-operation!

"If I preach to them, except in church, they will think it a bore, and turn the cold shoulder; whatever I do I must not weary them," he said, thoughtfully.

And then a plan arose in his mind; forthwith he decided on his line of action. As he stood musing, the clock struck eight.

"Breakfast-time!" he exclaimed, and began to descend the cutting in the cliff. A young lady, Miss Ethel Hatton, was coming down the road at some little distance, dressed in a fresh print gown and large straw hat; on her arm she carried a basket containing moss and ferns. He scrutinized her face attentively as she sauntered along, unconscious of observation. There was a certain freedom of walk and grace of movement about her which attracted his attention, but it was her face he most admired. It was not her fair complexion, her sunny brown hair, her bright, golden-brown eyes, that took his fancy so much as her expression, and the sweetness of her mouth.

"That is a good face, a very good face," he thought, for he was a keen observer of physiognomy; "it is a most conscientious face."

She passed on slowly, when, suddenly looking up, she saw the Vicar, who raised his hat. She blushed crimson as she bowed to him. A donkey-cart was coming up the road, the boy in charge was lagging behind. Ethel's thoughts were abstracted; the donkey took a mean advantage of the circumstance, and swerved violently to the left. The cart struck her, and knocked her down.

In a moment the Vicar was by her side. He raised her, and ascertaining that there was no great damage done, turned to the lad; but he, thinking an awkward inquiry imminent, had taken to his heels, and the donkey was jogging slowly on in the middle of the road.

"Are you much hurt?" asked Mr. Manley, seeing how white the girl's face had become.

"No," she returned, with a somewhat unsteady smile. "I am a good deal shaken, that is all."

"You are the second damsel in distress that I have succored this morning," he said, with a laugh; "but I am afraid it is no use offering you a penny or a cake plaster. I believe you are more frightened than hurt, although the shock of your fall could not have been inconsiderable. Take my arm."

She did so, and he saw she was trembling violently.

"The vicarage is much nearer than your house," he said, kindly; "you must go in there and rest. I will put you under my cook's care, while I go and tell your mother."

"Thank you," she replied, "a few minutes' rest is all I want."

"And what took you out so early, if I may ask, Miss Ethel?"

"I often gather ferns before breakfast to ornament the table; we have plenty of flowers in our garden, but no ferns."

"Perhaps I can persuade Mrs. Jonson, my cook, to favor me similarly," said the Vicar, with a slight twinkle in his eye. "At present I believe she looks on all table decoration of that sort as 'messes;' personally, I have a great love for flowers."

He opened the vicarage door with his latch-key, and led the way into the dining-room. A very white cloth was on the table, but the china and appointments were of the plainest. He rang the bell. The

cook appeared, bearing a dish of ham and eggs, followed by Sarah Jane, the housemaid, with the urn and coffee-pot.

"I did not ring for breakfast, Mrs. Jonson," said the Vicar to the astonished cook, "but to ask you to take care of this young lady for a short time, while I go out. She has been knocked down by a cart."

"La, miss! No bones broke, I hope," said Mrs. Jonson, in some alarm, hastily casting in her mind whether in that case she would have to be nursed in the house, and turn everything there upside-down.

Ethel laughed.

"There is really nothing the matter with me; I am so much better that I am sure I can get home now."

"You will oblige me by remaining a little while," said the Vicar, with much decision in his voice. "I will return with your father or sister in a few minutes, and meantime you cannot do better than eat some breakfast."

"And you too, sir," put in Mrs. Jonson. "You have been out these two hours, and must want your food. If you sit down now with the young lady, and have your breakfast comfortable-like, Sarah Jane can run round to the Admiral's in less than no time."

Sarah Jane, a stout, good-tempered young woman, looked as if she would rather remain where she was. It occurred to the Vicar that the arrangement might not lack in comfort, although it would want sadly in propriety; and then, as the idea of the fearful, hideous scandal that would forthwith arise in Newforth passed through his mind, he laughed, while Ethel again blushed scarlet.

"I can go in less time than Sarah, thank you, Mrs. Jonson," he replied, quietly, and taking up his hat went out.

"Shall I give you some breakfast, miss," said Mrs. Jonson, somewhat shortly.

"Thank you, *no!*" returned Ethel, promptly; "I would much rather not have any;" and she too thought of the remarks which would ensue in Newforth.

"Then I will take it down again, and keep it hot for the master," returned the cook, quickly, and seizing up the dishes for fear Ethel might change her mind. Her back once turned, Sarah Jane began to indulge her curiosity to the full.

"Do tell, miss, how it happened," she began, "and, now that master is out, wouldn't you like to step up-stairs with me and make sure there ain't no broken bones anywheres?"

The situation was becoming worse and worse; was it not enough to invade the Vicar's dining-room, but she must also trespass on his up-stairs premises?

"There are no bones broken," she replied, coldly. "I was very much shaken by my fall, and felt very faint for a short time; that is all."

Seeing that the housemaid's inquisitive eyes were fixed on her face, Ethel turned away, and looked straight at the table. But the watchful Sarah Jane would not thus be baffled in her efforts for conversation.

"Yes, miss, the breakfast service is plain—disgraceful plain to my taste, which I dare say is what you're thinking of."

Ethel immediately disclaimed any thought of the kind.

"But you see, miss," continued the undaunted Sarah Jane, "master, he made an agreement with cook when he first come. I heard 'em talking of it through the doorway."

"And what right had you to listen?" asked Ethel, sharply.

The housemaid laughed.

"Says he, 'Now, Mrs. Jonson, I don't want no trouble about house-keeping. I will give you so much a month, and you are to find everythink, breakages and all, and if there is any money over we will give it away in soup to the sick poor'—which *I* thinks a mistake. Sick poor, indeed! as if master weren't worth fifty sick poor."

"Really," said Ethel, "I should much prefer not to hear the details of the Vicar's domestic arrangements."

This somewhat lofty speech was above the comprehension of the housemaid.

"And I heerd that cat of a Mrs. Jonson a-saying to him," she continued, "'If I am to have a fixed sum every month, and pay for the breakages, Sarah Jane is that careless that I must put away all the best china.' And master he laughed, and said he did not at all mind that, so long as he could have ever so many tablecloths. And though he don't care much what he eats, if there is the least little spot on the tablecloth I daren't lay it again. And says he: 'I don't wish you to starve me, Mrs. Jonson, and you are by no means to starve yourselves; but if you are careful in the housekeeping, it will be all the better for my poor people.' So Mrs. Jonson, she says: 'Me and master will do this;' and, miss, she is that mean in the kitchen now, that I daren't ask for more than two helpings of meat for dinner; the only p'int in her favor is that she do look out for master."

Ethel went to the window, and caught sight of the Vicar and her sister walking along briskly. She went to meet them.

"This is an improvement!" said Mr. Manley; "I suppose breakfast has revived you. Really, I was somewhat uneasy about you, you looked so pale."

"I do wish you wouldn't be so moony, Ethel," added her sister, sharply; "do you suppose *I* should have let a donkey-cart run over *me*?"

"It shows me how great your relief is at finding your sister uninjured, Miss Hatton," said the Vicar, smiling, "that you can scold her; we are always glad to find some vent for our feelings when they have been roused. But don't be too hard on her."

"I won't," answered Miss Hatton, laughing; "but please do go in now, Mr. Manley, and have your breakfast, I am sure you must want it."

"Do I look faint and exhausted?" he asked, with a laugh.

"No; quite the reverse."

"Then, in my capacity of doctor, I will see you as far as your gate. I did study surgery at one time,"

"Why?"

"I knew it would be useful to me in a country parish. But I must run in and fetch your basket, Miss Ethel, you have left it behind you."

He ran in as he said, and overtook the girls in less than a minute, with an amused look on his face.

"Not only were the ham and eggs gone, but the dish and coffee-pot also! You did not eat them, did you, Miss Ethel?"

"I—" began Ethel, looking confused, when the Vicar interrupted her.

"No, don't explain; I am sure I understand the true state of the case. I am quite aware that Mrs. Jonson looks on every one as a mortal enemy who interferes with my breakfast or dinner; I have no doubt she scarcely gave you the opportunity of any breakfast."

The bend of the road brought them face to face with Admiral Hatton, who had finished his toilet in a prodigious hurry; which, perhaps, was the reason that his necktie was pushed under his ear, and his hair stood on end.

"Here you are, my girl!" he exclaimed, heartily, holding out his hand to her as he spoke; "we began to think something dreadful was the matter. People who tell you about an accident nearly always hide the real truth."

"That is not my custom," answered Mr. Manley. "I always think it best to state the exact circumstances;" and after a few further words he took his leave.

At the garden gates Mrs. Hatton appeared; a stout, kindly-looking woman of forty-five. She, too, had dressed hastily, and came forth *minus* a collar.

"What a relief to see you, my dear!" she exclaimed; "the Vicar gave us such a turn when he said you were at his house feeling faint. I thought it must be something much worse."

"Truth must be a great rarity," said Miss Hatton, somewhat scornfully, "as when a man is found who speaks it simply, no one believes him. Ethel felt faint, and the Vicar said so, and we all thereupon imagined she was dead!"

"I hope the story won't get about," said Mrs. Hatton, a little anxiously, "people do make such ill-natured remarks. They might say she only made a pretence in order to see something of Mr. Manley."

"Stuff an' nonsense!" rejoined the Admiral, testily. "Ridic'lus! Let them say what they like."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRITISH WORKMAN.

THE Vicar was at his garden gate, a newspaper in his hand, when Mr. Leslie went by on his way to the town.

"Good-morning," said Mr. Manley; "you are the very man I wanted to see. I am now going to ask for your help."

"I thought the ladies were to help you. I hear you have summoned a grand meeting of them to the vicarage this morning."

"That is the case."

"With a view to pauperizing the parish?"

"Kindly explain yourself," returned the Vicar, with a smile.

"Well, in other words, I heard you were going to establish district visiting, which I suppose means giving money to working men's families who don't want it. Talk about the working man!" said Mr. Leslie, with great energy, "why, we are slaves to him! Whether the House of Lords will be done away with I don't know—I am not much of a politician—or whether England will ever be outwardly democratic I don't care; but I do maintain that the working man is in reality lord and master *now*."

"How so?"

"I can't drink a glass of wine because the 'working man' may find it a bad example for him; I can't bet half a crown on a boat-race because the 'working man' should not gamble. I declare he is in every way first and foremost. Theoretically he is an intellectual person, who must have picture-galleries and museums open on Sundays to improve his dear mind (quite regardless of the fact that it deprives ever so many other people of their rest on Sunday); he must have libraries, and read Ruskin and Tennyson, and study the higher life and high art; he must have the choicest photographs to adorn his walls. Well, *perhaps*"—Mr. Leslie's tone was extremely dubious as he said this word—"perhaps the London working man is that sort of a person, but, as far as the Newforth working man is concerned, I will tell you what he is like—and I ought to know, having had vast experience of him in these law-courts, and frequently seeing him, to use a forcible but graphic expression, 'beastly drunk.' The Newforth working man, as I before said, has only one idea, and that is beer. If there were fifty Ruskins and a hundred Tennysons, and two hundred and fifty picture-galleries and museums in this place, he would still spend his time on Sunday between bed and the public-house."

"What more cogent argument could you possibly adduce for striving to reclaim him?" asked the Vicar, quietly.

"I believe the effort hopeless, and you will only be laughed at for your pains."

"I suppose," said the Vicar, holding out his paper, "that you do not accuse the *Standard* of any sentimental leanings towards the Church?"

"No; the *Standard* is always moderate."

"Have you seen it this morning?"

"No; I take the *Times* and *Telegraph*, which I prefer."

"Then I will read you a short passage from the leader of to-day: 'When we look out upon the mass of suffering and sorrow and vice which greets us in all our great cities, and know that the only class of men seriously engaged in combating it are the clergy, it seems little short of monstrous to protest against the extension of their influence. If they had ten times as much as they have, we

might all be grateful for it.' You see, some portion at least of the world does not think all effort hopeless."

Mr. Leslie shrugged his shoulders.

"With regard to pauperizing the people," continued the Vicar, with a smile, "I do not propose to do so. I will tell you how I wish to give. If I were ill and any kind friends sent me—let us say some beef-tea, or jelly or"—he laughed—"or perhaps a mutton chop, or a pudding; if any one did so—"

"If?" interrupted Mr. Leslie. "If you were ill, the ladies would send you cartloads of jelly and grapes, barrels of beef-tea. I don't know about the chops and the puddings," he added, with a laugh, "but there would doubtless be hampers of game."

"And," said the Vicar, "were I to see these cartloads of which you speak (really, the Newforth people must be more generous than I gave them credit for!) unpacked before my very eyes, I should accept them gratefully in the spirit in which they were sent, and not feel in the least degree pauperized. Send a man to me who can work but won't, and you won't find I have anything to bestow on him except a few words of rather stern advice."

"You may not, but the ladies will be imposed on."

"Perhaps so: we must all buy our experience."

"Now, do you really think that women are a morsel of good in the way of work, Mr. Manley?"

"Decidedly they are of use."

"My opinion," said Mr. Leslie, energetically, "is that they go at it with a rush, for the novelty of the thing, and then get tired and give it up."

"I grant you they are sometimes not to be depended on, but is every man of your acquaintance to be depended on? And for small acts of self-sacrifice give me a woman."

"That's all very well," returned the church-warden, "but you must be quite aware that half of them will come to-day to see *you*."

"I dare say they will," replied the Vicar, with a smile, for he was a thorough man of the world, clergyman notwithstanding; "but, according to your own showing, the other half will have a better motive."

Mr. Leslie perched himself on the gate-post, his long legs dangled on the ground; the Vicar looked at his broad chest with approval.

"As I before said, you are the very man I want to help me."

"What's it about?" asked the warden, dubiously. "I give you fair warning, Mr. Manley, I'm not going to be cajoled into doing anything in the way of poor and sick people; it isn't in my line."

The Vicar laughed.

"And," continued Mr. Leslie, "I think I ought to tell you that you have got the wrong sort of warden, and I seriously advise you to put up another man in my place next Easter."

"It strikes me that I have got the right sort of warden, and I have no wish to change."

"Perhaps Admiral Hatton and I had better exchange duties; I'm sure he would suit you better; and if I represent the people, I

shouldn't mind having an occasional argument with you if you innovate us too much."

"Admiral Hatton would be of no use for the service I am going to ask of you. It is not to visit the poor and sick."

"Is it missions then—collecting money, or anything of that sort? because I tell you frankly that I can't bear missionaries."

"Strongly as I sympathize both with home and foreign missions, I am not going to ask you to assist in that manner. Try again."

"It's to give a subscription to something."

"It is quite possible I may ask you to do so, but that is not the primary object of your help. I want you to get up a cricket club."

"Oh!" said the church-warden, vastly relieved. "Well, I shouldn't mind doing that."

"I thought you would not, though it will give you a great deal of trouble."

"How did you know I was a cricketer?"

"Perhaps I evolved the fact out of my inner consciousness," replied the Vicar, laughing; "but I knew that if you were not a cricketer you ought to be, with your muscles. The fact is, there are a vast number of young men and lads about this town, who, not having yet arrived at the public-house stage, still get into terrible mischief for the sheer want of something to do. I want to get hold of them. We must induce them to join our club, and set them going to begin with. If it can do no good it can do no harm."

"And am I to play with all these cads?"

"You are certainly to direct them how to play. I will come and play myself when I have time. I used to be a very fair bowler."

Mr. Leslie's face brightened perceptibly.

"If *you* are coming, we shall get along in fine style, and I think I can manage the first outlay in the way of stumps, bats and balls, etc."

"Thank you very much; once fairly started it should be self-supporting."

"Quite so!"

"And I hope after a time to get hold of these lads in other ways; get them to attend church, and so on."

"I hope I haven't to be responsible for *that*!" exclaimed Mr. Leslie, in alarm.

The Vicar laughed heartily.

"By no means, I will take all that responsibility."

"I shouldn't mind lending my field to play in; but I fear I must be off now, or I shall be very late."

"Good-bye then, and thank you very much. Our greatest difficulty is now removed at the outset, for your field will be a capital place to play in."

"Now, what possessed me to offer that field?" thought Mr. Leslie as he walked on, "when I positively refused it, even for one day, to the Dissenters last year. However, if I do go in for this business, I'll go in for it thoroughly. I shall beat the Vicar at single wicket, I'm sure."

The ladies assembled at the vicarage at half-past eleven. Mr.

Manley had given out a notice in church that he should be glad of a few ladies to assist him, therefore he was scarcely prepared for the influx of thirty-eight.

After, with some difficulty, seating them in the drawing-room, which, fortunately, was a large double room, with folding doors, he stood up in front of the mantelpiece and began to speak.

In repose his face was habitually grave, his somewhat spare cheeks and determined mouth giving him almost a stern look; but when he smiled—and he smiled as he addressed the ladies—his whole face lit up.

As he looked round the room he thought of the church-warden's words, and wondered how many of the assemblage had come to see him personally; and then he dismissed the thought as unworthy, and resolved to look on them in the light of helpers, solely and simply.

Most of the principal families were represented by some member or other, young ladies preponderating. Miss Hatton was there, looking very handsome; Ethel very pretty.

The Vicar gave a searching glance into every one's face, and, selecting twelve ladies, asked them to become district visitors.

"That is to say," he continued, "if it will not interfere with home duties; for I am sure you will agree with me that they have the first claim."

Two ladies begged to withdraw their names in consequence Miss Hatton and her sister volunteered in their stead.

"But what are we to do?" asked the former, briskly; "are we to walk unauthorized into their houses, and look in their cupboards, and tell them their rooms are not clean, and force a tract into their hands?"

"I hope not," returned the Vicar, smiling; "can you not call on them as you would on any lady of your acquaintance. Make friends with them, that is all I ask to begin with, and by degrees induce them to help themselves. By visiting them regularly you can soon do this, and will then be enabled to point out to me any special case of distress or poverty or sickness or spiritual want, which I shall only be too glad to look into."

And then other schemes, relating to clubs for clothing, etc., were discussed, until every one in the room had her work cut out for her.

"I trust I may not frighten you by my demands," he said; "and I am quite aware you will all say that with me it is a case of 'new broom.' Granted; but we are told a new broom sweeps clean—at all events for a time; and there is one subject which I must approach cautiously, as it is a very delicate one—I mean the subject of your dress."

"You don't want us to wear poke bonnets, I hope, and dress like Sisters!" said Miss Hatton.

"On the contrary; far be it from me to suggest that you are not always dressed with the same elegance with which I see you now. I was only going to advise—though I know I am taking a great liberty, for which I trust you will pardon me—that in visiting the poor, you should *not* wear your oldest clothes, where the houses are clean,

The very poor, especially, admire good dress in their lady visitors, and take it as a compliment. I will arrange to go round with each of you on your visit and introduce you."

"In that case," whispered Miss Hatton, "he may be quite sure we shall wear our best clothes!"

CHAPTER V.

ETHEL'S TROUBLES.

It was a pouring wet day and, in addition, there was a southwest gale blowing. It had been raining in torrents all night, and the state of the roads was beyond description.

Ethel Hatton stood in the hall of her father's house, habited in an ulster and felt hat.

"What's the front door open about?" called Miss Hatton from the dining-room; "it makes such a fearful draught in here."

"I am going out," returned Ethel, opening her umbrella.

Miss Hatton went into the hall. Lieutenant Campbell, who was staying in the house, followed her.

"You can't be such a fool as to be going to your district to-day, Ethel," said her sister, who was given to plainness of speech.

"It is the day."

"Does the day admit of no alteration, like the laws of the Medes and Persians?" asked Mr. Campbell, a tall, big young man, with fair hair and a long flaxen beard and mustache.

"When I undertake a duty, I like to fulfil it," Ethel replied, distantly, Mr. Campbell being no favorite of hers.

"The mud will be up to your ankles in Rosemary Lane: let me see what boots you have on," said Miss Hatton.

Ethel held out a very pretty French-clad foot.

"It's ridiculous to go out like that," continued her sister; "you will be wet through before you are out of the garden gates."

Mrs. Hatton came down-stairs at this moment.

"What are you all doing in the hall?" she asked. "With this wind blowing, it makes the house very cold to have the door open."

"Ethel insists on going to visit her district, mother," said Miss Hatton; "and just look at the boots she has on."

"You certainly cannot go like that, my dear. But if you will wear my goloshes, I do not know that you will take any harm."

Now, of all things Ethel abhorred goloshes.

"They are a great deal too large for me; I could not keep them on," she replied.

"Then you must stay at home, my dear; I cannot let you run the risk of being laid up."

Ethel considered a moment, and remembered a practical sermon of the Vicar's, in which he had said that duties should not be set on

one side because they involved small sacrifices. Surely this was a case in point.

But to wear the odious goloshes was nothing less than a great sacrifice; well, perhaps the more creditable.

"I will wear them," she said, ruefully.

"I will put them on for you," said Mr. Campbell, muttering to himself as he did so, "it will speed the parting guest."

There is nothing more conducive to misgiving than having our own way. A little more opposition, and Ethel would have departed with the feelings of a martyr; as it was, her heart began to fail her.

"Though I advised your sister not to go, I must say I am very glad to have a chat all to ourselves," said Mr. Campbell, returning to the dining-room with Miss Hatton. "Is she sweet on your Vicar that she is so bent on carrying out her good works?"

"That isn't fair," replied Miss Hatton, warmly. "Ethel always did the most absurd things if she thought she ought; she is a most conscientious little creature."

"You did not answer my question, all the same."

"Come to that," returned the girl, calmly, "we are *all* in love with him."

"I say!" ejaculated Mr. Campbell, crossly.

Miss Hatton laughed. "Oh, don't be alarmed; there is safety in numbers, you know! Besides, the men are just as bad. Somehow, the Vicar has such a knack of getting round people. Now, there is Mr. Leslie; he declared first of all that nothing would induce him to exert himself, yet here he is working like a slave about this cricket club, and canvassing right and left to get people to join, and obtaining subscriptions. Not only that, but he, at the Vicar's suggestion, is doing his utmost to get up a guild for the amusement of the young men during the winter months."

"How does this ninth wonder-of-the-world manage it?"

"I don't know. Somehow he does manage it. He says to people, 'I am *sure* you will do this and that,' and they do it."

"I have heard quite enough about him, I assure you. I object to hashed Vicar, and would rather not have a *réchauffé* of all his wonderful doings. I wonder how Miss Ethel is getting on."

Miss Ethel was getting on very badly. "Was there ever such rain?" she thought. It came down in pelting torrents; in five minutes' time the corners of her umbrella were streaming. She shut this up in despair.

To save her steps she turned down a narrow lane, a short-cut to her district, her feet slipping at every step. The large goloshes stuck in the mud, which now penetrated between them and her boots. Her hair, blown about, straggled on her forehead; her hat was pushed on one side. She struggled bravely on, ashamed to turn back.

But who was this coming down the road which intersected the lane she was in? Horror of horrors! It was the Vicar!

She felt she *could* not see him in her present plight, so walked on as fast as possible. Alas, her speed was fatal to her! with a sudden spring one of the hateful goloshes jumped off her foot, and lodged

in a ditch some inches deep in mud. In stooping to pick it up a further misfortune befell her: her purse dropped from her pocket and lay in the middle of the road.

She stood and looked at it, helplessly holding the golosh in one hand, at arm's length. Her gloves were ruined; her feet—one glance at them appalled her. Were these two mud-enveloped lumps her nice little feet, of which she had been so proud? She looked again, and suddenly burst out laughing.

A manly voice spoke at her elbow. "Pray, allow me to assist you. This is the second time I find you in difficulties!"

There was the Vicar buttoned up to the chin, and wearing gaiters. There was a smile in his eyes as he spoke, otherwise he gave no sign of appreciating the humor of the situation.

He picked up the purse, and with his clean white handkerchief wiped it dry.

"You will ruin your handkerchief," said Ethel, nervously. He took the golosh from her hand and, shaking the mud from it, was proceeding to apply his handkerchief to that also.

"I can't let you do that, Mr. Manley. Please give it to me, and—and—I do wish you would go on." A gust of wind came as she spoke, and nearly blew her down, while the sea broke on the shore in great billows.

"Are you aware that when you get round the corner you will feel the wind with double force? I doubt if you will be able to stand."

"Is it as bad as that?"

"It is quite as bad; and although you wish me to go, I really feel it to be my duty to see you home."

Ethel crimsoned. If only her hat would keep straight, and her hair stay in its place, she thought it would not seem quite so bad.

The Vicar polished the india-rubber shoe, and threw his handkerchief into the lane afterwards. (In parenthesis we may observe it was picked up and restored to him clean.)

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Ethel, "you have lost your handkerchief all through me."

"It is not often that I indulge in a piece of extravagance. Do you consider it very wicked on my part? I could not well put it into my pocket."

"You are very kind, thank you very much. Please give me back my goloshes."

"I have only one; I will put it on for you."

"Oh, don't trouble yourself, Mr. Manley," said Ethel, nervously;

"I can put it on myself, and I *don't* want you to see me home."

"I doubt if you will get home at all, unless I do; the gale is increasing every minute. Now, put out your foot."

She did so; it appeared such an enormous size, caked as it was with mud, that the sight overcame her gravity. The Vicar laughed also.

"I fear the goloshes are rather large for you. I must suggest, if you will allow me, that you should take the other off and walk home without any, seeing that you can scarcely be in worse condition as to wet and mud than you are already."

"I couldn't carry them home; the one I have on must weigh pounds, from the mud on it."

"I take the hint; I shall be pleased to carry them home for you."

"It wasn't a hint, Mr. Manley," said Ethel, blushing furiously; "I would greatly prefer carrying them myself to troubling you."

He smiled.

"Now, wasn't that speech a little unkind?"

"Why?"

"You know I shall not allow you to take them, and you wish to deprive me of any credit when I carry them."

"Are you sure I cannot go on?" she asked, meekly.

"I am quite sure. Let us turn our faces towards your house."

The wind now was in their backs; it forced Ethel along at such a rate that she became breathless.

"Stand still a moment," said the Vicar, "and take my arm."

She did so, and in spite of her discomfiture thought there might be worse situations than to be in the company of a delightful Vicar, who was looking down at her with so pleasant an expression in his bright eyes. That he would have done as much for any old woman of his congregation she was quite aware, but, would he have looked at her so kindly? She hoped not.

"What took you out on such a morning?" he asked.

"I was going to visit my district."

"Do you not think you would have been wiser to have remained at home?"

"I only went because you said I ought," returned Ethel, feeling very crestfallen.

"I said you ought?" repeated the astonished Vicar.

"Yes; you said last Sunday that we ought not to neglect our duties because they made us uncomfortable."

"I am very glad that you do endeavor to give a practical result to my teaching; but in this instance you must forgive my remarking, my dear Miss Ethel, that your zeal should have been tempered with discretion."

She looked very grave.

"Are you very much offended with me?" he continued, with a smile. "Rest assured that I give you full credit for your good intentions; only I think that you would have been wiser to have gone out to-morrow, instead of to-day."

"Of course I am not offended, Mr. Manley," she replied, gently; "I see I was very foolish. I am only sorry that I should have put you to so much inconvenience."

"I have very often endured a far more disagreeable morning; it is all in my day's work."

"You are so good to every one."

"I don't know that. Look there, this is Mr. Rowen!"

Now Mr. Rowen was the new curate; a tall, thin, melancholy man, with large bony hands, and an expression of countenance which suggested to the onlooker that the church's treatment of Mr. Rowen had

not been quite equal to what it ought to have been in the estimation of that individual, and that this fact had caused a settled gloom over his life.

At this moment he was struggling with his umbrella, and the umbrella seemed getting decidedly the best of it, having turned inside out, and resolutely refusing to be restored to a decorous position.

Mr. Manley laughed.

"You will never manage it, Rowen," he said, "so long as you stand with your back to the wind;" and taking the umbrella out of the curate's hand, he grappled with it successfully, restoring it to the owner shut. "Umbrellas are a mistake on such a day," he added. "Also"—in a lower tone, which only reached Ethel's ears—"also goloshes."

Mr. Rowen looked helplessly at his wet coat, and observed that, as the rain was coming in large splashes on to his face, he thought he had better go home.

"I think so too," replied the Vicar.

"Now, Miss Ethel, we are at your house at last."

"Won't you come in?"

He would have declined, but Admiral Hatton was at the door, and gave him a hearty invitation to enter and have lunch. The sight of the Vicar with his daughter did not cause him the smallest surprise; it was his opinion that every young man would escort his girls home if he could get the chance.

"May I wash my hands?" asked Mr. Manley, holding his out, and showing the mud on them.

"There isn't a very good lunch, father!" said Miss Hatton, in a low voice.

"You won't mind that, will you?" returned the Admiral, loudly.

"I am quite sure I shall not mind."

But although the luncheon was very plain, consisting of cold mutton, bread, cheese, butter, and biscuits, the table was prettily laid, and the whole effect very good; for the girls were careful always to see to these points. The butter was made into fancy shapes and ornamented with parsley, the cheese grated, while the six vases of flowers on the table were most artistically arranged.

Like most retired naval officers, Admiral Hatton was not very well off; but house-rent was low and living moderate in Newforth, therefore he and his family managed to live in quiet comfort.

Their house was a long, low, rambling building, standing in a large garden; it was somewhat out of repair, but looked very homelike, with the shady trees surrounding it, and bright flowers in the beds in front. At luncheon the Admiral ordered in some rum and whiskey, and some hot water.

"Now, Mr. Manley," he said, heartily, "you have been very wet, you must take a glass of hot grog."

"You must excuse me, sir," returned the Vicar, "I never take spirits of any kind."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the old man, with energy; "you have been wet through, and must want it."

"I am not indeed," replied the Vicar, quietly; "my overcoat and leggings thoroughly protected me."

The Admiral began to argue the point, and in the midst of the discussion in came Mr. and Mrs. Leslie; for Mrs. Leslie was a dauntless young woman, who disregarded weather.

Seeing that Admiral Hatton was becoming seriously discomposed, the Vicar thought fit to give a reason for his refusal.

"I am not a teetotaler," he said, in answer to a direct question, "but I never touch wine, beer, or spirits."

"Do you disapprove of it?"

"Certainly not, in moderation; but I found I could not speak with any effect to men who drank unless they were aware that I abstained myself. In this manner I have induced a large number of men who were ruining themselves to sign the pledge."

"I knew it," said Mr. Leslie, triumphantly; "a slave to the working man!"

Miss Hatton gave him a meaning glance.

"How about your lads?" she asked. "You needn't look so innocent, Mr. Leslie; I hear you are as touchy as possible now concerning their behavior, and take quite a pride in the cricket club."

"Ah," he replied, "those lads do behave well; they are the exception which prove the rule. I dare say I am a slave to the working man also; I always said we all were."

"I must confess," said the Vicar, "that it took me a long time before I could feel any real sympathy with the temperance movement. But the longer I live and go about among the poor—ay, and sometimes among the rich too—the more strongly I feel the pressing need of exertion to try to stem the tide of drunkenness, and the fearful evils caused thereby."

"Awfully slow conversation!" said Mr. Campbell to Miss Hatton, in a low voice; "these parsons are such prigs."

"Be quiet," she replied, sharply; "Mr. Manley is certainly not one."

"Look at his hair parted so evenly down the middle, not a hair awry!" rejoined Mr. Campbell, who seemed to look on the fact as a personal affront; but to this remark Miss Hatton paid no attention.

"There must be something very wrong about cold water," said Mr. Leslie, "judging by the effect it has on nearly every one—present company, of course, excepted. A cold bath of a day makes a man despise every one who does not take one—I know this by my own feelings; and I am given to understand that teetotalers think not only that every virtue under the sun may be summed up in the word teetotalism, but that every vice under the sun is represented in the person of those who are *not* teetotalers; but on this point I do *not* speak from experience."

"As there is no actual teetotaler present," said the Vicar, with a smile, "suppose we leave it an open question," and then certain church matters began to be discussed between himself and his colleagues.

"To do as you propose will take a large sum of money," said Mr Leslie.

"We will raise it."

"But how? If Mr. Smith wanted enough money to pay for a broken window, he could not get it without grumbling at us for a quarter of an hour at a time."

"I do not propose to grumble; I do not think any one is influenced in that manner. But may I ask what you call grumbling?"

"If I take a five-pound note, and you say to me, 'You are a thief, you have committed a sin,' that is all right, you are doing your duty; but if I make an effort to go to church on a wet night, and then have to listen for no end of a time to complaints because the other people have stayed away, that I call grumbling; and, if clergymen only knew it, it affronts the congregation beyond measure."

"And very properly," replied the Vicar. "But I must say I never hear this grumbling of which you speak."

Mr. Leslie laughed.

"Really, I think a clergyman ought sometimes to look with the eyes of the congregation. *You* don't grumble, and when you go to other churches, of course, the mere sight of a brother clergyman, whether in a black coat or surplice, prevents the vicars from scolding their people. But if you only knew how perpetually the congregations at other churches are lectured for what is as often as not the clergyman's own fault, for his failing in *his own* duty, you would not wonder at what I say. A man who has a season ticket for the Crystal Palace, and spends his whole time between that and going to parties, cannot expect his congregation to work among the London back streets; but that very man will take his people to task on that account, as if he himself were immaculate and were always doing good works."

"I am sorry to hear it," said the Vicar. "Since I have been among you I have had no cause to complain."

The party had adjourned to the drawing-room. Mr. Campbell went to the window and looked out seawards; the waves, white-crested, were rolling in heavily.

"Even should the wind drop, there will be a good sea on to-morrow," he remarked. "I hear"—turning to the Vicar—"that you are a good swimmer; will you swim round the further buoy with me to-morrow morning; and if you beat me I will give you a sovereign towards your offertory."

"I never bet," returned Mr. Manley, "but I will swim with you at six to-morrow morning; I cannot be later on account of the eight-o'clock service."

"Is there service every morning? That's something new, isn't it?"

"Yes," replied Miss Hatton, "it *is* something new. There are a great many things new, and will be a great many more, I have no doubt."

"And who goes? only girls, I suppose."

"We have a very fair number, though we hope for more."

Miss Hatton walked into the conservatory, followed by Mr. Campbell.

"Why did you ask him to race you?" she said. "He is athletic, but I don't know that he is so very strong, while you are; and I don't suppose he can swim as well as you do."

"If anything were wanting to decide me, it would be your speech," replied the young man, with a disagreeable frown. "I should have thought you might have shown a little solicitude on my account."

She laughed.

"Now, don't be cross. I'll tell you what I will do. I will get all the girls I know to go to church to-morrow morning, and you can tell us all about your winning the race when service is over."

Mr. Campbell looked highly gratified.

"That's a good idea. He will come into church dead beat, and gasp through his reading."

"For shame!"

But on the morrow the Vicar entered the church as the clock struck eight, looking fresh as usual, and took the entire service without any effort (for at present Mr. Rowen did not attend in the morning).

He had gone round the further buoy, and beaten Mr. Campbell easily.

"Here is your sovereign," said the latter, sulkily, as he stood in the porch; "and what are all those girls grinning about?" he added, savagely, watching a group of girls laughing and talking. "It seems to me the service hasn't done them much good, or they wouldn't be giggling inside the very church doors."

"I quite agree with you," returned the Vicar, gravely. But no argument would induce him to accept Mr. Campbell's sovereign.

CHAPTER VI.

THE AMATEUR CONCERT.

"I WISH you would tell me, Gertrude," said Ethel Hatton, "what you intend to do about Mr. Campbell."

The girls were dressing for dinner; Miss Hatton was seated in front of her glass, combing out her long dark hair.

"What have you done with my hairpins, Ethel?" was the only reply she vouchsafed.

"Here they are," returned Ethel; "and now, perhaps, you will answer my question."

"What do you suppose I am to do about him?"

"Well," said Ethel, slowly, and looking out of the window as she spoke, "it seems to me that it is scarcely fair to encourage a man so much, who is deeply in love with you, if you don't care about him. And I really don't think you care for Mr. Campbell—and I'm sure I don't."

"As to that," replied Miss Hatton, calmly, "no one ever thought you *did* care for him, and it's just as well you don't."

"Do *you* care for him, Gertrude?" asked her sister, earnestly.

Now, there had been a time when Miss Hatton had thought she did; she was very much less sure of her feelings now. The advent of Mr. Manley had aroused in a really noble nature a desire for better things than Mr. Campbell's somewhat vapid society talk. But of the Vicar she saw little in private, and she was not blind to the fact that he preferred her sister to herself.

The earnest, intellectual talk in which he sometimes indulged filled her with keen delight; he was not only deeply read, but thoroughly conversant with the literature of the day—poetry, art, science, architecture, etc. Unfortunately, it was so very seldom that he conferred the pleasure of his conversation on her—as indeed, in a place where there were so many ladies, how could he? But, as she said, he lived other people's lives to so great an extent, entering into all their joys and sorrows, that he had no time to show them *his* inner life.

"I do not know why you are so anxious to ascertain my feelings, Ethel," she replied to her sister. "I certainly do not think a little suspense will injure a man of Mr. Campbell's stamp."

"Not if you intend to accept him eventually."

"I do not see that I am bound to reveal my intentions," said Miss Hatton, coiling her splendid hair on to the top of her head, bird's-nest fashion, and fastening in some chrysanthemums. "I would much rather be told if I look nice."

"You look very nice; but as no one except Mr. Campbell is coming to dinner, you are taking great pains with yourself, if you don't care for him."

"If I detested him, I should still wish to look nice, my dear; if you *look* charming, you can't do very wrong—in a man's eyes."

"He is coming up the road," said Ethel, looking across the lawn.

Now Lieutenant Campbell belonged to one of the harbor ships of the neighboring town of Seafort.

"Let me see," said Miss Hatton, going to the window and peering through the branches of the trees. "Yes, there he is. He is certainly a fine-looking fellow, but what a marvellous thing it is that so many naval officers, no matter what they pay for their clothes, never get them to fit like soldiers do. There is nearly always a certain bagginess about their coats and trousers."

"Because they go to naval tailors for their plain clothes. But I am sure Captain Worsley is always well dressed, except that his clothes have rather too sporting a cut."

"He does dress well," returned Miss Hatton, "and why? Because, though he is in it, he hates the navy. Don't you remember the night he came to see us before going to Africa, when he arrived at eleven o'clock at night; he might have been an hour earlier, but that instead of coming straight to us he went to Seafort and changed his clothes, *because he was ashamed of being seen in uniform!*"

"He is ashamed of the navy altogether," said Ethel. "I can't

think why he stays in it. He puts *Mr. Henry Worsley* on his card."

"On that point he is a regular fool, my dear. Now, father thinks the highest rank in any other profession is not equal to that of an admiral. He ranks people thus:—Queen, Prince of Wales, Royal Dukes, ADMIRALS. It is a very harmless belief!" And indeed it was true that to his mind *the world* consisted of the army and navy, sprinklings of "these civilians"—meaning the rest of the English population—being thrown in just to fill up odd corners.

"We ought to go down-stairs," said Ethel. "I can hear Mr. Campbell's voice."

"It will increase his ardor to be kept waiting," said her sister, composedly. "Mother is in the drawing-room."

"He always fidgets so, and is so disagreeable until you come in; he pulls his beard, and looks like a sulky bear."

"Very probably; you used to say the same about Captain Worsley."

"Oh, he was very much in love with you, Gertrude; if you had only let him, he would have proposed to you before he went away."

"Let bygones be bygones; perhaps I will listen to him on his return from Africa, which, I believe, will be shortly. We will go down now."

Mr. Campbell was sitting in front of the fire, appearing, as Ethel had predicted, very sulky. The sight of Miss Hatton, looking very handsome in her black velveteen and red chrysanthemums, did much towards restoring him to good-humor.

"So we are to go to this concert to-night!" he exclaimed; "awful bore, isn't it?"

Now, an amateur concert was to take place that night under Mr. Leslie's management. The idea had been suggested by the Vicar, ostensibly to raise funds towards putting in a large and beautiful window in the east end of the church; but in reality it was one of many successful efforts made by him for drawing his people together, and encouraging friendly intercourse.

"I think we had much better stay at home!" continued Mr. Campbell. "Come, I'll give five shillings towards the fund, if we all sit over the fire instead."

"We are going to do nothing of the kind," replied Miss Hatton; "but *you* can give five shillings, and sit over the fire yourself, if you like."

"It is raining."

"There is a little rain," said Ethel, looking out of the window; "but we are not going to let *that* keep us away."

"If it rained and hailed and snowed and raged, and *the Vicar* asked us to go miles anywhere, we should go," said Miss Hatton.

"*You* might," retorted Mr. Campbell.

"We all should; the congregation assemble in a body now when they are told to do so. Shall I borrow a quotation and tell you why?"

"If you like," said Mr. Campbell, impatiently.

"Because he has 'the deep sincerity of purpose, the sight of which has so strong an influence in inducing others to follow our admonitions.' He lives as he preaches."

"Give your authority!" returned Mr. Campbell, with a short laugh; "I believe you invented that yourself to impose on me."

"I am sure I did not."

"I am afraid you cannot go to-night, my dears," interposed Mrs. Hatton; "it is raining fast."

"We can wear goloshes, or we can take shelter at the vicarage," remarked Mr. Campbell, to whom Ethel's first adventure had been told in strict confidence by her sister.

"The girls are not made of sugar and salt, my dear; they won't melt," said Admiral Hatton. "I am going myself."

"I told you so," returned Miss Hatton, triumphantly; "you will see every one will go, rain or no rain. Father doesn't go out once a year of an evening, except to church."

"Is it a dress affair?"

"Oh, no; it is only a shilling concert; you can keep on your overcoat, for no one dresses. I hope it will be a success."

"I met your *rara avis* this morning in Seafort!"

"What did he say?"

"He said," remarked Mr. Campbell, with an expression of pleasure, "that Mr. Leslie had beaten him hollow at single wicket; and he also observed that, except to teach his choir boys to swim as a reward, he was getting rather out of practice in swimming, and that very likely *I* had been out of practice when I swam with him, which was true enough." (For it had come to Mr. Manley's knowledge that Mr. Campbell was seriously offended at being beaten, and the Vicar regretted that the match had ever come off, seeing how much ill-feeling it had given rise to on the lieutenant's part.) "I dare say," continued Mr. Campbell, "that he said it because he wanted me to come to his concert to-night."

Ethel's indignant reply was prevented by the entrance of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie, and Mrs. Allen and her son and daughter.

"I believe the whole thing will be a failure," said Mr. Leslie; "I have never had anything to do with amateur concerts before. The Vicar manages the next, I'm thankful to say; but I hope he will be present to-night to preside."

"Why should he not?" asked Mrs. Hatton.

"I saw him hurrying towards the station at a great rate; it struck me whether he might not be going away somewhere."

"I dare say it was only that some poor person had sent for him. I wonder, if *I* were in trouble, unconnected with illness or misfortune—mental trouble, let us say—how long I might want him before I could get him, and yet he would go instantly to a poor person. Clergymen always give poor people the preference."

"My stock sentiment!" said Mr. Leslie; "the supremacy of the working man!"

"My opinion," said Mr. Campbell, "is that they vastly prefer the rich. Don't curates generally marry girls with money?"

"They could not well marry without," returned Mrs. Leslie; "but it is very often because the rich people invite them the most, and so they see the rich girls most frequently. But I agree with you to a certain extent, for I think that people like ourselves come worst off. As we don't happen to favor personal confession in this neighborhood, I should have to face an ordeal before I could get the Vicar to speak to me seriously."

"You could ask to see him in the vestry," said Mrs. Allen.

Mrs. Leslie laughed.

"Well, I might; but I will tell you how it would be. I should first send a message by the verger, who always wants to know every one's business, and then, when I got into the vestry, both clergymen would look at me inquiringly. I should stammer forth that I wanted to speak to the Vicar alone, and the curate would withdraw. Then, on ascertaining that no such terrible affliction as the loss of my mother-in-law had befallen me (I mention this especially, because it is a loss that would appeal to *every* man's sympathies!) the Vicar, with the best intentions and quite against his will, would wonder what snare was being set for him, and whether the conversation would be quite correct. By this time all my courage would have oozed away, although I might be in the very depths of mental trouble!"

"You can scarcely wonder at clergymen being cautious," said Mr. Leslie; "think of all the young ladies who would want sympathy!"

"I suppose even young ladies have souls!" rejoined Miss Hatton, sharply.

"Ah! but I will tell you what actually happened to Mr. Manley in his last parish," said Mr. Leslie; "and mind you, this is a literal fact, for which I can vouch, as I heard it from his former curate. A maiden lady, some forty years of age, had been in the habit of attending the services. He was in the vestry one day, when, to his horror and amazement, she entered, and throwing herself at his feet, exclaimed, 'O Mr. Manley, I love you so!' 'Get up this moment,' he replied, 'and leave the church. How dare you come in here?' The curate, unknown to her, was in the vestry at the time, and the story went all over the place."

"*Disgusting!*" said the girls, in chorus.

"Yes," rejoined Mr. Leslie, "but that was only one instance of which we happened to know. A good deal must go on to annoy a clergyman that he never speaks of."

This was certainly true as regarded Mr. Manley. He had received letters without end, he had been persecuted with attentions, he had been worried beyond belief by the very popularity in which he was held; in short, he had been exposed to all those temptations which no one but a clergyman, or those intimately acquainted with clergymen, can form any idea of.

"It is incomprehensible to me why he should be so much run after," said Mrs. Allen; "his preaching is not remarkable, and he is certainly melancholy."

"I do not agree with you," replied Mrs. Leslie, warmly; "he is one of the very few clergymen one believes in, which makes him a most exceptional preacher; and to me that quietness of manner is a great charm. I feel in another world while I listen."

"I suppose he *is* liked," said Mr. Leslie, "for I am now at my wits' end to seat the people; if the church goes on filling at this rate, we must put chairs down the aisles, for every sitting is taken."

"But what has he?" asked Mrs. Allen; "some five hundred a year, I suppose. What kind of style could a girl keep up on that?"

"Many of our young ladies are glad to marry on three hundred a year," replied Mrs. Leslie.

"You astonish me," said Mrs. Allen, raising her eyebrows; "if *my* daughter were to contemplate such a thing, I should take her abroad until she had forgotten all about her love affairs. Is Mr. Manley of good family?"

"I never asked," returned Mr. Leslie, who was quite aware that the Vicar was well descended. "I am to infer, then, that when he proposes for Miss Allen, you will reject him for her with scorn! I really think I ought to warn him. But perhaps some other young lady *might* be found to accept him. As for the money that comes in, when he asks for it, it is like the widow's cruse of oil—the more we spend, the more we get. I think *I* will ask the congregation to find *me* a carriage and pair of horses!"

"Don't you wish you may get it!" said Mr. Campbell. "For Heaven's sake, let us talk of something besides this everlasting Vicar. Even the curate would be better for a change; he is also an unmarried parson."

"Yes," replied Miss Hatton, "only that we haven't a notion what he means in his sermons, although he has been accustomed to preach for twelve years past; and it is exactly the same to every one, whether he is in a room or out of it."

The rain had ceased to fall when the party set out for the concert, and Admiral Hatton predicted a fine night.

The room was already half full when they took their seats. Mr. Leslie had hurried on, and was busily engaged in conducting people to their places. In ten minutes' time every chair was occupied.

The room was very ugly, but its hire was cheap, and Mr. Leslie had feared that the audience would not be sufficient to fill the large concert-room in the Town Hall.

Anxious glances were given towards the door at eight o'clock, but no Vicar appeared. Mr. Rowen was present, though no persuasions would induce him to advance beyond the door-mat. Although Mr. Leslie was evidently doing his utmost, the arrangements were decidedly primitive.

In full view of the expectant audience, a toilet looking-glass was brought through the concert-hall, and deposited in the little room behind the platform. Some minutes later a grocer's boy appeared, bearing a basket of bottled ale and stout, which he took in triumph to the retreat before mentioned; and oh, worse than all, behind him

came a pot-boy, carrying a large can, which could not be mistaken for other than malt liquor!

"It is lemonade, Miss Hatton," said Mr. Leslie, mendaciously, in passing. "But why in the world have they brought everything so late?" he mentally ejaculated.

"And this is your teetotal Vicar!" said Mr. Campbell.

"I can't imagine why they want so much to drink," replied Miss Hatton. "At the Choral Society" (for a Choral Society was now an accomplished fact) "we sing at the top of our voices for two hours continuously, without any refreshment whatever."

A woman carrying teacups and saucers now went up the room.

"More to drink!" exclaimed Mr. Campbell. "My gracious!"

"As none of the performers are to sing more than two songs each, I should not have thought so much refreshment necessary," remarked Ethel.

"My husband is always afraid of not providing enough," replied Mrs. Leslie; "it won't come out of the concert funds—he pays for it himself." And in truth he was a most generously disposed man.

The audience now began to wax impatient.

At a quarter-past eight Mr. Leslie went on to the platform, and announced that the Vicar had been suddenly summoned to London on pressing and unexpected business, and was very sorry he could not be present.

A feeling as of a wet blanket at once overspread the assembly.

"I really think he might have been here," said Mrs. Allen. "Clergymen have not much to do; and I am sure he need not have gone to London. I dare say he is there to enjoy himself."

"I am sure he is not," said Miss Hatton, indignantly.

"Clergymen little to do?" echoed Mrs. Leslie, in amazement. "I know of no men who have so much to do. In addition to their physical and mental work, which is very arduous, they have—" but here she paused, knowing she could not speak of the weight of spiritual care an earnest clergyman always bears on his mind to such a woman as Mrs. Allen.

"You will find yourself in the wrong box, mother, if you speak against the Vicar," said young Mr. Allen, a happy-looking, stout young man, and a great admirer of Miss Ethel Hatton's.

To Ethel, as to all the company, the Vicar's absence had been most unexpected; she knew the evening would be a blank to her, but she went on laughing and talking.

A young lady came forward and played a piece on the piano. It was a very mild performance, and the audience listened in melancholy resignation.

Then Mr. Leslie, who showed a gallant front in spite of all difficulties, announced that he was extremely sorry to say that two of their principal performers had not come at all, and that a third had so bad a cold, owing to the damp evening, as to be quite inaudible. Something between applause and groaning followed this declaration, on the part of the audience. He hoped, however, continued Mr. Leslie, that the deficiency would be satisfactorily supplied by three

gentlemen who had kindly volunteered to sing and recite at a moment's notice. A feeble rapping of umbrellas took place, ceasing on the appearance of a lady and gentleman on the platform, who informed the audience in different keys, and shockingly out of tune, that they were both in search of a kindred spirit with whom to dwell.

"It's perfectly awful," said Miss Hatton. "Whatever you do, don't applaud, Mr. Campbell, or we shall have it all over again."

"It's jolly," returned that young man, who was a very fair musician. "I had no idea I should be entertained so much; they must have finished on F sharp instead of G natural."

A reaction had now seized on the audience, who now felt an insane desire to laugh on the first opportunity that presented itself. They listened with struggling gravity to a young man, one of the volunteers, who sung to them of his "love," and his "dar-ring" frame; but when a stout, lugubrious gentleman replaced him, and began in most pathetic tones to recite a piece treating of the woes of human nature—and intended to be eminently pathetic—the suppressed merriment burst forth; during the entire recitation there was one continuous roar. Mr. Campbell laughed until the tears rolled down his face. "It's glorious," he exclaimed. "Look at the old fellow's long face now."

The performer was highly offended, and altogether declined to take any part in the proceedings that were to follow. "You must cut out my piece," he said, grimly, to Mr. Leslie, who was beginning to think that the stars in their courses were fighting against him. At his instance the audience clamorously demanded an *encore*, which, although not acceded to by the unfortunate reciter, did much to pacify him.

"An assembly exclusively composed of ladies and gentlemen ought to behave better," remarked Mrs. Allen.

"Why, that's the very reason we *needn't* behave ourselves," returned Miss Hatton; "we all feel like a family party now; I never knew such a friendly congregation."

The aspect of affairs was becoming serious to Mr. Leslie. Only one half of the allotted time was over, and only two more performers were to sing. He felt half inclined to tell the people to set aside the forms and finish the evening with a dance, but was not sure whether the Vicar would approve of this arrangement, so he manfully threw himself into the breach, and said that he would recite a comic piece. It proved a very comic business; the exigencies of the piece demanded a certain amount of acting, to which Mr. Leslie did full justice. The audience, having been previously wound up, laughed until they could laugh no longer. Admiral Hatton was delighted; he said he did not know when he had enjoyed himself so much.

"I had no conception that the entertainment would be so thoroughly frivolous," said Mrs. Allen; "and a church entertainment, too! I am quite disgusted."

"The Vicar would have laughed as heartily as any one, had he been here," replied Mrs. Leslie.

"Perhaps; *that* does not raise the character of the proceedings."

"Come, mother," remonstrated her son, "it really wasn't so bad as all that. I think we have had a very jolly evening, and we have the satisfaction of knowing that we shall hand over a good sum as the proceeds to the Vicar" (for young Mr. Allen was very active in parish affairs).

"It is simply church dissipation," returned Mrs. Allen.

"Anyhow," said Miss Hatton, "we shall go home without feeling that we have been doing something wrong, which is more than can be said for many other forms of enjoyment. I quite agree with Mr. Allen that it has been a very jolly evening."

"First-rate," said Mr. Campbell.

CHAPTER VII.

A FRIENDLY VISIT.

A CERTAIN gravity had been perceptible about the Vicar ever since his sudden journey to London. He was equally indefatigable in his work, equally charming in society; but to Ethel Hatton, who had begun to study and understand his moods, it was evident that some cloud was over him.

Now, subtle comprehension is one of the mysteries of love, and many and many of the delicate intricacies of thought communicated themselves from his mind to her, entirely unknown to the world at large. There was no special talent about this girl, but there was a deep wealth of affection; and the Vicar always felt, between her and himself, a close spiritual affinity. He scarcely ever saw her alone, but he knew, as well as if he had been told so in language, that there was a strange sympathy between them. As yet he had not told himself that he loved her; but that he liked her better than any one else, and believed in her and respected her, he had told himself often. Whenever any new scheme arose in his mind, his first thought was that he would tell her of it. It was not that he thought she could assist him, or influence him—he knew well that her mind took its tone from his—but that he *liked* to tell her of it.

Calling one day at Admiral Hatton's, and finding no one in the drawing-room, he idly took up a volume of Tennyson's earlier works, which lay on the table. There were pencil-marks on the page at which it opened, and a scent of lemon plant hung about the book. The poem was "Fatima." He read some of it aloud with a great deal of unconscious sarcasm in his voice:

"O love, love, love! oh withering might!
O sun that from thy noon-day height
Shudderest when I strain my sight,
Throbbing thro' all thy heat and light;
Lo, falling from my constant mind,
Lo, parched and withered, deaf and blind,
I whirl like leaves in roaring wind.

* * * * *

I will grow round him in his place,
Grow, live, die looking on his face—
Die, dying clasp'd in his embrace."

"It is tolerably strong language," said the Vicar, turning over the leaves. More pencil-marks attracted his attention, and this time he laughed.

The poem was "Eleänore:"

"Soon from thy rose-red lips *my* name
Floweth; and then, as in a swoon,
With dinning sound my ears are rife,
My tremulous tongue faltereth;
I lose my color, I lose my breath,
I drink the cup of a costly death,
Brimm'd with delirious draughts of warmest life,
I die with my delight, before
I hear what I would hear from thee;
Yet tell my name again to me,
I would be dying evermore,
So dying ever, Eleänore."

The Vicar closed the book.

"And we grow out of all this," he said, musingly; "and are we better or worse?—better for losing our dreams? sadder for seeing things more as they are? yet, even now, through a glass darkly, how darkly yet."

Miss Hatton came in.

"I am so sorry we have kept you waiting, Mr. Manley," she said, brightly; "the others will be in soon, and I have only just come in from a walk; the servants did not know I was out."

She removed her hat and jacket as she spoke, and rang for tea. Her rich color glowed in the firelight; her eyes sparkled; she was unfeignedly glad to have a *tête-à-tête* with the Vicar. She gave him a cup of tea, and sat down opposite to him.

"If I were to accept all the tea offered me, I should never have tea at home," he said, smiling; "but I will not refuse this, although I have just been taking tea with Mrs. Stevens, at Fisherman's Cove."

"You take tea with a widow! Oh, Mr. Manley, how very improper!"

Now, Mrs. Stevens was a hard-featured, homely-looking woman, of some fifty years of age.

"I often have tea at the Cove," said the Vicar; "the people like it. I had a very good tea to-night, although the china was somewhat thick. Bread and butter, shrimps and watercress."

"You shouldn't have eaten shrimps, Mr. Manley," returned Miss Hatton, laughing. "No one can eat shrimps and look dignified."

"I do not know that I am anxious *always* to look dignified, but I assure you that shrimps, dissected on scientific principles, may be eaten without any loss of self-respect, always provided that you may wash your hands afterwards."

He extended his hands to the blaze; in spite of his constant outdoor work, they were very white.

"Every man to his taste," said Miss Hatton.

"Talking of taste, whose mental pabulum is this?" he asked, pointing to the volume of Tennyson.

"That is Ethel's; she is a very romantic little thing."

"Indeed!" and the Vicar found himself wondering whether, under any circumstances whatever, she would apply the high-flown poetry to him; he rather hoped she would not.

"Are not you romantic, Miss Hatton?" he asked, with a smile.

"I am not, indeed. I like tangible comfort, instead of imaginary bliss. Now, I call *this* comfort."

"Do you refer to the tea, the fire, or the society?"

"The tea and the fire would scarcely be appreciated without the society."

The Vicar was wary, but a glance at the girl's honest, frank face convinced him that he need not be on his guard. He began to talk to her on church matters, more especially about his cherished scheme—the chancel window, which had now been commenced.

Both the church-wardens had expressed themselves amazed at the manner in which the money was being raised, apparently without effort.

"I hope the window will be finished soon after Christmas," said Mr. Manley; "and, what is more, paid for. I think it will be a very beautiful work of art."

"I hope it will not be so beautiful as to be beyond our comprehensions. Something quite too-awfully too-too."

"It will not be beyond our comprehensions," replied the Vicar, gravely.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Manley; I ought not to have said it," said the girl, frankly. "I did not mean to be irreverent, it was only a tribute I was paying to your æsthetic tastes."

He smiled. "I cannot but accept an apology so readily and spontaneously offered."

"The *Parish Magazine* is a great success," said Miss Hatton, anxious to change the subject.

"I think it is; it barely pays its expenses, but that is a secondary consideration."

An expression of great amusement passed over her face; she began to laugh.

"What do you find to amuse you so much?"

"If I tell you, I shall shock you again; I was thinking of what you said in the *Magazine*."

"What did I say?"

"You won't be angry?"

"I will not."

"It was your account of Mr. Rowen's sermon—a sermon I heard with my own ears."

"What can you find to laugh at in Mr. Rowen's sermon?" asked the Vicar, with some disapproval in his voice.

"I am not laughing at his sermon. His sermon was—well, I don't know what it was; but to read your *précis* of it in the *Parish Magazine*, one would have imagined it was beautiful."

"I still fail to see any cause for merriment."

"There isn't any real cause," replied Miss Hatton, somewhat disconcerted; "it only reminded me of a passage in one of Black's books—that is all."

"What was that?"

"Where some gentleman came in, and was understood to make inquiries after another gentleman's health, but what he *said* was, 'Haw-yaw?' That is like the difference between Mr. Rowen's sermon and your account of it."

"I cannot submit to be criticised thus," said the Vicar, cheerfully, "and I won't have a word said against Mr. Rowen; he is a genuinely good man, even if he is not a particularly good preacher."

CHAPTER VIII.

ECONOMY.

CHRISTMAS had come and gone. It had been a bright, merry, old-fashioned Christmas; the snow lying on the ground, but the sun brilliant.

Little had been done in the way of decoration at the parish church, it was so large; but that little had been in accordance with nature, the Vicar disliking everything artificial. So the young men and the young ladies had hung up boughs of holly and evergreens and mistletoe, and placed growing flowers in pots round the pulpit, communion-table, and font, and that was all.

But the work had been done heartily and cheerfully; the Vicar had assisted personally, with a kind smile on his face; and even the tall, thin, and melancholy curate had been so far enlivened as to make a joke about the number of ladies, and the small amount of work there was to do.

But there had been plenty of work outside the church. There had been school prizes given, and warm clothing and food for the poor, and parish teas, and various entertainments of dissolving views and magic-lanterns.

It was no part of Mr. Manley's scheme to pauperize the parish, and encourage the able-bodied poor to accept relief when they were in a position to work; also, he was of opinion that even their amusements should be, as a rule, self-supporting. But at Christmas-time he held that this rule should be set on one side, and that all should endeavor to give with both hands liberally.

But another matter was now sorely troubling him; this was that he was now personally quite unable to give to the charities with the generosity which had characterized all his previous dealings. He felt this keenly.

He had taken more than one journey to London, on each occasion returning with a cloud on his face, with a line of care on his brow.

His voice had taken a deep, pathetic ring, especially in church, or when speaking on thoughtful subjects.

It was after one of those journeys to town that he sent for his cook, Mrs. Jonson, and informed her that, having a large payment to make—a most imperative payment—he found himself most reluctantly compelled to reduce his own and his household expenditure in every possible manner, and should therefore be forced, greatly against his will, to part with her and the housemaid, replacing them by one general servant. (He could not avoid wincing as he said this, it was so *very* disagreeable; but it was a duty.)

“What did you say, sir?” asked Mrs. Jonson, in indignation. “Part with *me*? me, as has done the best I could for you ever since I have been in your service, and has looked on you, as one may say, as a son.” (The Vicar’s age was thirty-five, that of Mrs. Jonson forty.)

“I have fully appreciated your faithful service, Mrs. Jonson, and your unvarying kindness to me,” he replied, gently. “Believe me, I am not taking this step because I have any fault whatever to find either with you or with Sarah. I am doing it because, for some little time, I am *obliged* to save expense in every way possible. For yourself, I have always considered your services by no means adequately repaid, in actual money value. I am quite aware of your kindly feeling towards me.”

“Very well, sir,” replied Mrs. Jonson, with determination; “then I can tell you I’m not going. Sarah Jane may go, and welcome; she has always been more trouble than enough, being that extravagant and that careless, and I shall do quite as well without her. Who will cook you nice little dishes for supper when you come home, unexpected-like, if I go? A general servant, indeed! No, sir, I ain’t a-going!”

The Vicar was much gratified.

“I am very glad to hear you say so, Mrs. Jonson,” he said, much relieved. “I should have missed you sorely had you left me. It is very good of you.”

He sighed as he thought how much unpleasantness his perforced economy was entailing on others.

“Don’t take it to heart, sir,” said Mrs. Jonson, cheerfully; “and if I may make so bold, I don’t wish to take so much wages now. Servants are cheap here, and many and many a cook I know does not get eighteen pounds a year. I shall be quite satisfied with twelve.”

But this her master would not hear of.

Lent was now coming, and the various church entertainments were to conclude for the present. Owing to pressure of business, the Vicar had requested Admiral Hatton to organize the second concert, at which, however, he would preside, himself taking the management of the third. But although ostensibly under Admiral Hatton’s direction, the entire work was undertaken by his daughter Gertrude.

Warned by the failures of the preceding entertainment — which

failures had been a source of great though unexpressed annoyance to Mrs. Leslie—she had secured an ample supply of talent, and, to guard against any non-appearance of the performers, had taken care that there should be two or three people in the room who could sing, if called on.

The refreshment supply, too, was much more limited, consisting only of tea and lemonade, and the looking-glass was taken into the room *before* the audience arrived.

On this point Mr. Leslie was very wroth.

“I told the fellows over and over again,” he averred, “that everything was to be sent in early; you will have the pull of me, Miss Hatton.”

As in this case she had, for the concert was a decided success; so much so, that it was resolved to engage the large Town Hall for the final entertainment, which, when it at length came off, was more than a success. Every seat was occupied at a quarter to eight; the Vicar and Mr. Leslie spent almost an hour in striving to place chairs in every available space after the concert had begun; and finally, the platform itself being crowded, a number of people spent the evening in the doorways and passages, Mr. Leslie telling them he was extremely sorry, but all he could say was, he hoped they would imagine they were at a promenade concert.

At the close of the evening he addressed the audience, thanking them for their support, and afterwards spoke in such high terms of Mr. Manley—more especially alluding to his unvarying kindness to every one—that the unfortunate Vicar, who was sitting on the platform, turned sharply round and leaned his head against his hand, his profile only being visible, his cheek one vivid crimson.

He was a man of extreme delicacy as well as depth of feeling, and this open tribute was to him almost painful. Ah, if he had foreseen how variable is human judgment, and how soon the verdict of Newforth would be reversed. Happily, he could not see into the future.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WINDOW.

LENT passed away quietly. The Vicar was a most thorough and earnest churchman, but he held no extreme views. He contented himself with increasing the services and addresses, and urging his congregation to give up for a time the distractions of the world, in order that they might have more time and inclination for prayer, meditation, and general earnest thought and action in doing good.

And at the close of Lent his beautiful chancel window was finished; it was to be first displayed on Easter Sunday. But, on the Saturday preceding, he thought he should like Ethel to see it before any one else; that he should wish to show it to her himself. He

scarcely knew how to manage this, but walked towards Admiral Hatton's house, trusting to a chance opportunity.

The first person he met was Mr. Campbell, who was also going to the Admiral's house, though coming from a different direction.

"You are the very person I wished to see, Mr. Manley," said the younger man. "I have to announce an approaching visitor to you."

"Indeed, who is that?"

"A very old friend of yours, a Mr. Yorke."

"Mr. Yorke!" repeated the Vicar, his eyes sparkling with pleasure. "I shall be indeed glad to see Mr. Yorke; he was one of my best friends. Where did you see him?"

"I have been staying for a few days with the Vincents, at Orton, and met him there. He and his wife have just come from Australia."

Now, Orton was some twenty miles from Newforth, and in the same county. Captain Vincent was county member, and was a man of considerable wealth and importance. Mr. Campbell, a man of good connections, was distantly related to Captain Vincent.

"I shall be delighted to see Mr. Yorke," said the Vicar again, as well as he could make himself heard for a most discordant brass band that was playing. "I had lost sight of him for a long while. When is he coming?"

"Some day next week. He knew you would be very much taken up just at Easter. I happened to mention one day to Mr. Yorke, who, with his very pretty wife, is staying at Templemore, that the parson's name at Newforth was Manley, and then he questioned me. He seemed equally pleased to hear about you."

"I have never seen his present wife. I knew the first Mrs. Yorke slightly."

"She is extremely pretty," returned Mr. Campbell, "though I prefer Mrs. Vincent."

"I do not know Mrs. Vincent," replied the Vicar. "Really, I think that band is a disgrace to the town."

"I wonder *you* don't take it in hand," returned Mr. Campbell; "you seem king of Newforth."

Miss Ethel now came down the road, and stopped to speak.

"Well met!" said the Vicar. "Will you come with me to see the new window?"

"Oh, yes; I should like it above all things," returned Ethel.

"Am I included in this invitation?" asked Mr. Campbell.

"To be frank," replied the Vicar, with a smile, "you were not."

"Honesty is the best policy," said the young man. "I will take myself off at once."

"But," resumed the Vicar, "I shall be extremely pleased to show it to you on *any* other occasion."

"To be frank," retorted the young man, "I don't think I care about seeing it. Now, would you care about seeing my ship?"

"Very much," replied Mr. Manley, promptly and unexpectedly.

"All right; then we'll get up a party to go there," said Mr. Campbell. "Now, I'm off."

"There's something up between your sister and the Vicar," he remarked to Miss Hatton. "I was coolly told to take myself off."

"I am inclined to think that there *is* something up, though I know he has not proposed to her."

"Do you think she will have him?"

"I assure you we should *all* marry him were he to ask us," returned Miss Hatton, with a laugh.

"I think it's about time I went, after that."

"You will please to remember that, as far as I know, he has no intention of asking all the young ladies of Newforth to marry him."

"Oh, bother it!"

"That is rude."

"I will apologize, if Mrs. Hatton will ask me to stay to dinner."

"Dinner!" echoed Admiral Hatton, who had been quietly asleep in his arm-chair at the other end of the room. "Of course you will stay to dinner."

"There is hashed mutton and plum-pudding for dinner; you don't like hashed mutton, Mr. Campbell, do you, any better than 'hashed Vicar'? You see I haven't forgotten your rude speech."

"I like anything I can get, so long as I may stay."

"You may stay," said Miss Hatton, graciously.

Meantime the Vicar and Ethel were walking towards the church. It was a bright, cold, clear day, the tracery of the bare branches was beautiful against the blue sky. Ethel's color was high, her face glowed with health and pleasure.

"She is lovely to-day," said the Vicar to himself.

The sea was rolling on the sands in great waves; its roar reached them at the church gates; the distant vessels were tossing up and down.

"How I love the sound of the sea," said Ethel; "it speaks to me in actual language."

"There is no doubt," he replied, "that three-fourths of the world go through it in ignorance of the vivid imaginations and deep intellectual sympathies of the remaining quarter. *You* are imaginative, perhaps too much so for your own comfort."

"But," she returned, quickly, "*you* can understand me; for you are also imaginative."

"It is one of my duties to keep my imagination under control. I hope I do not treat you to sermons consisting of speculative theories, rather than truths."

"Oh, no," said the girl, warmly. "I wish you would let me tell you what I do think of your sermons."

They were standing in the churchyard, so full now of graves that burials were no longer permitted there, but no longer untidy and neglected.

She pointed to a cross standing at the head of one of the more recent graves, bearing the inscription, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

"I think," she said, gravely, "that your sermons teach us that."

"It is all I wish to teach," he replied, quietly.

He now proposed that they should enter the church. He was pleased that the conversation had taken this serious tone; he did not wish his window, the glory of his heart, to be seen in a light mood for the first time.

He watched her as she first raised her eyes to the chancel, he watched her as she advanced slowly up the aisle and stopped on reaching the steps.

He was thankful that she did not exclaim, "I like it so much," or, "It is so pretty," or anything of that sort.

She looked in silence for some five minutes, her color coming and going, her face full of expression, and then she turned to him with a light in her eyes:

"I think, Mr. Manley, that it is *perfect*."

The window was divided into three compartments: the centre represented the Sermon on the Mount; the two sides, Peter walking on the Sea of Galilee, and Paul bidding farewell to the brethren. It was a work of high art; the subjects occupied scarcely more than one-half of the glass. The upper portion consisted of delicate tracery which seemed to melt away into air, conveying the idea of unlimited space. It was a very beautiful conception.

The Vicar explained the subjects, and then asked what it was that she so particularly admired in it.

"It is this," she replied; "it is not what you see, it is what you can imagine about it."

"What does it remind you of?"

"It reminds me of Heaven," she answered, simply.

He made no reply. A higher tribute he knew could not be paid.

The communion-table was already decorated with white flowers for Easter.

"They are very beautiful," she said, pointing to them. "I hope there will be a fine day to-morrow, as so many people will come."

"I think it will be fine."

"But there are always a number of communicants, whether on Sundays or weekdays; how is it, Mr. Manley, when there used to be so few?—and yet you never find fault with them for not coming, or anything of that sort."

"People do not come because they are found fault with," he replied, with a smile. "It is time for us to be going."

He locked the door after them and looked up at the short tower.

"We must get the spire up soon. It is now Easter Eve; we will have the vane flying, I hope, by next Christmas."

"It will take so much money," said Ethel.

"I think we shall do it."

"You must get some rich man to pay for it."

"Oh," said the Vicar, quickly, "I think it would be so much nicer if we were to do it ourselves."

"There are not many months to Christmas. As you say, Lent is over; but, oh, Mr. Manley," she continued, laughing, "you were de-

terminated to inflict *some* penance on your congregation during Lent, and I must say that you selected a form that was very real."

"*I* inflicted penance?" he repeated, in astonishment. "What was it?"

Now, during Lent the Vicar had obtained the services of various clergymen from distances; they had preached for him continually; indeed, he scarcely ever was in the pulpit himself.

"The penance was depriving us of your sermons, and I must say I wish you had selected any other form."

"Do you know that you are trying to flatter me? I know that I ought sternly to rebuke you; but somehow," he continued, with a smile, "I do not feel in the humor for rebuking you just now."

"I should not mind *your* rebuke," she answered.

"Then I will not administer it. But suppose," he added, "it was a penance to *me* not to preach in my own church; for I feel it as such."

"Will you come in?" she asked, at their garden gate.

"No, thank you, not to-day?"

A warm, delicious sense of pleasure was over Ethel as she slowly removed her outdoor clothing in her room, and adorned herself for dinner. She pinned some violets into her dress, and went downstairs, her beautiful eyes soft with pleasure.

"And how has the love-making progressed?" asked Mr. Campbell, who was sitting over the fire with Admiral and Mrs. and Miss Hatton.

"Love-making?" said Ethel, indignantly, stopping short in the middle of the room. "Love-making? and from the Vicar? How dare you, Mr. Campbell?"

"I apologize," said the young man, negligently. "I thought, as I had known you ever since you were as high as the table, that I might venture on a joke. And, pray, why shouldn't your Vicar make love as well as any other man? He isn't a saint; he is only a man, I suppose."

"No quarrelling," said the Admiral, good-humoredly. "You young people are always at it. I suppose it's another name for friendly conversation."

"Just so, sir," replied Mr. Campbell, who never for one moment lost in respect to his superior officer, independently of the Admiral being so much his senior; "you are quite right."

"You shouldn't have said it," remarked Miss Hatton, in a low voice. "Ethel is so much vexed."

Mr. Campbell pulled his beard impatiently, and took out his watch.

"Isn't it getting time for the hashed mutton?" he asked. Now, Mr. Campbell hated hashed mutton, as Miss Hatton very well knew.

"I think we are going to do a little better for you than that," she replied, brightly; "so don't be cross."

CHAPTER X.

REFORMATION.

THE Vicar had now been a year in Newforth, and a marvellous change had taken place in the town.

The church was thronged and, to his special delight, largely attended by the poor, for whom some of the best seats were reserved. Every service was well attended, every offertory good. There were coal clubs and shoe clubs and clothing clubs; there were Young Men's Associations and Young Women's Associations; there were choral meetings, and choir meetings, and district visiting, and Bible classes, and children's services, and National Church Schools, and mothers' meetings, and Sunday-schools, and missionary meetings, and church entertainments, and parish libraries, and cricket and football clubs, and swimming-schools, and charities of all sorts—all in connection with the trim, well-kept parish church, the neglected church of so short a time back.

"We live in a whirl of gayety," said Mr. Leslie.

Every poor person was relieved, every sick and afflicted person visited, not necessarily by the Vicar or curate—for no two men could have done it all—but by some one.

The staff of church workers was enormous; no sooner did one resign than another supplied his place. There were no quarrels, there were no dissensions; the Vicar was the head, and the others were content that it should be so. Even the verger was satisfied, although he had been heard to say that his work was now something awful, not at all like the easy life he led in Mr. Smith's time, and that the Vicar did blow him up so if the people were not properly seated at the weekday services.

"We are too heavenly," said Mr. Leslie; "it won't last, it can't last—being, as we are, human beings."

He was right; it did *not* last. But for the present all was peace. Admiral Hatton was genially tolerant, Mr. Leslie active and most energetic. In spite of his former asseveration that he could not bear missionaries, he had been known to hold the plate at some of the meetings, and, with his accustomed quickness, to order all the proceedings. He had even been seen—though with the understanding that the fact was not to be made public—to take a class at the Sunday-school for some weeks, during the absence of the regular teacher.

The trouble that had been hanging over the Vicar seemed to have lifted, his face had resumed its brightness, his severe economy had been given up, and another Sarah Jane had been installed at the vicarage.

A great source of pleasure had now been afforded him in the so-

ciety of Mr. and Mrs. Yorke. The former had been so much pleased with Newforth, on spending the day there, and so heartily glad to see Mr. Manley, that, with his wife's cordial approbation, he had taken a furnished house on the Esplanade for the three summer months. They had lately come from Australia, and were to return thither again. They had one child, a very pretty little girl, and were, he thought, the happiest married couple he knew.

There was only one thing wanting to complete the Vicar's happiness; it was to ask Ethel Hatton to become his wife, and this he determined to do on the first favorable opportunity.

CHAPTER XI.

NAVAL OFFICERS.

It was a bright, warm day in June. The blue sky was flecked with little fleecy clouds, a gentle breeze was stirring.

Admiral Hatton's garden was in perfection, the roses were in full bloom. At the hall door were drawn up two dashing turnouts: Mr. Yorke was on the box-seat of the one, his own mail phaeton. Mr. Campbell prepared to mount that of the other.

The long-talked of visit to his ship was now to take place, which, for one reason or another, had been so often postponed. He had invited Mr. and Mrs. Yorke, Mr. Manley and the two Miss Hattons (whom Mrs. Yorke was to *chaperone*) from Newforth, while he had also invited Captain and Mrs. Vincent from Templemore. They were all to lunch at the hotel at Seafort, and have tea on board. But Captain and Mrs. Vincent had replied that, as a Mr. and Mrs. Fortescue were staying with them, the party would be very large, and they would only come on condition that they should give the luncheon, although they would have great pleasure in taking tea on board at Mr. Campbell's invitation.

"Why, of course, they can give the lunch, if they prefer it," that young man had exclaimed; "and welcome—rich people as they are! It had much better come out of their pocket than mine; but, anyhow, I'll order it, and we won't spare the champagne."

"Mind that there is coffee for Mr. Manley," Miss Hatton had replied; "he won't touch wine."

"More fool he," returned Mr. Campbell.

The order of going was now settled. The whole party would have preferred that Mr. Yorke should drive his wife, and that the other gentlemen should take the young ladies; but, as propriety had to be considered and Newforth was given to scandal, it was decided that Mr. Yorke should take Miss Hatton, while Mrs. Yorke was to accompany Mr. Campbell. The expense of the second mail phaeton, which was hired, was shared by the Vicar and Mr. Campbell. The latter felt it his duty to offer the reins to Mr. Manley; he was much relieved when they were refused.

"I thought you liked driving, Mr. Manley," said Ethel, beside whom he was seated.

"So I do; but there are times when I prefer uninterrupted conversation."

She looked pleased. She was looking her best, in an irreproachable costume of dark blue (her favorite color), trimmed plentifully with gold braid; a sailor hat completed the get-up.

"We all know the opinion entertained by the public of naval officers' horsemanship and driving," said Mr. Campbell. "I hope I shall get you there all right."

"We are not at all afraid," said Mrs. Yorke, who could drive as well as any one since she had been to Australia, her husband having taken most especial pains to teach her.

"Be sure you wrap up well, my dears; it will be cold on the water," said good Mrs. Hatton.

Mr. Yorke raised his hat, and, taking the lead, went off with a flourish.

Mr. Campbell turned to the Admiral.

"By the way, sir, I forgot to tell you that Worsley's ship is in; she arrived last night. I shouldn't wonder if he were to come on board us to-day." This piece of information had been purposely withheld until Miss Hatton was out of hearing.

"That fool," returned the Admiral, contemptuously. But Commander Henry Worsley was no fool. "I tell you what it is, my lad," continued the old man, pushing back his gray hair, "it's no use for any man to wish to be my son-in-law who is ashamed of the queen's service and of his uniform."

This speech might have been considered suggestive, but it was uttered with the simplicity which the old school of naval officers generally possessed, although in conjunction with much practical shrewdness. For in his time the polished, somewhat cynical, æsthetic, learned, iron-clad type of officer had no existence; not a single specimen was to be found.

He *always* believed that the young men who came to his house were in love with his daughters; but if this were the case, and although he had every wish to see them well married, he certainly did not lend a helping hand towards this desirable consummation. No sooner did he see any young man in earnest conversation with either Gertrude or Ethel than, with a benevolent smile on his fine, rugged face, he would join them, without the remotest notion that his presence at the time was other than desirable.

Now, although the girls were greatly attached to their father, who looked on them both as prodigies of beauty and cleverness, it must be owned that this course of proceeding sometimes became a trial almost too much for flesh and blood to bear, and Gertrude had more than once complained to her mother:

"I wish you could give father a hint not always to come when there is something special going on. I know young Allen was on the point of proposing to Ethel the other day in the garden, when father came up, and insisted on his talking about the war."

She might have added that the very same thing had happened to herself when, one day, she was deep in conversation with Captain Worsley.

"Your father does enjoy being with you girls so much," Mrs. Hatton had replied.

"Oh, very well," Gertrude answered, coolly; "but when our prospects are blighted forever you will have yourself to thank, you know."

"They are not likely to be blighted just yet, my dear."

Now the Vicar was well aware of this predilection on the part of the Admiral, and had made up his mind that when he proposed to Ethel, which he purposed doing this very day, it should certainly not be either in Admiral Hatton's house or garden.

Mr. Campbell had raised his whip for a start when the old man checked him.

"Why are you not in uniform, you sir, as you are going aboard?"

Now, Mr. Campbell was habited in gray, and had on a round hat of Tyrolean shape.

"Oh, come sir, there is a time for all things," returned the young man. "I really couldn't drive through Newforth in uniform—that is to say, not on a mail-phaeton. They would take me for one of the Four-in-hand Club, or, more probably, a railway guard or a pier-master."

"So *you* are ashamed of your uniform also; you had better mind your p's and q's, young man."

"I assure you I am not, sir," replied Mr. Campbell, who saw he had put his foot in it; "and I have already given orders to have my uniform at the hotel, so that I may dress there. *Of course*, I am going on board in uniform—and a precious bore, too," he muttered to himself.

"I can't for the life of me see why you shouldn't be in uniform now," retorted the Admiral, warmly. "*I* never was ashamed of mine; why, at this present moment, I have some of it on," he continued, pointing to his trousers, the remains of his former outfit.

"Dark blue trousers are very fashionable, sir," returned Mr. Campbell, with a laugh, in which Mrs. Yorke could not refrain from joining, as the cut of the Admiral's trousers was decidedly anything but fashionable.

But, although there was a twinkle of humor in the Vicar's eye, no smile was suffered to appear on his face.

"Look at Mr. Manley there," proceeded the Admiral, who had by no means relished the insinuation that he was wearing blue trousers because they were fashionable. "Look at Mr. Manley, he isn't ashamed of his colors; you never see *him*, except in his black coat."

"But what *could* I wear?" the Vicar hastened to interpose; "I really have no other clothes except clerical ones."

"If this is going on, father," said Ethel Hatton, "Gertrude and Mr. Yorke will arrive and finish their luncheon before we get there; I really think you must forgive Mr. Campbell for dressing to please himself."

The Admiral recovered his good-humor.

"Have it your own way, my dear; a nice day of it you will have, you young people together."

"I will be responsible for your daughters," said Mrs. Yorke, with a bright smile.

"Get along!" returned the Admiral, who was now intimate with the Yorkes; "a young thing like you!"

"But *I* will be responsible for Miss Ethel," said the Vicar, in pursuance of a plan he had determined on; "and if you do not see her in good time this evening, you will know that I will account to you for her. You can drive on, Mr. Campbell," he added, raising his hat to Mrs. Hatton.

This speech opened even the eyes of the Admiral.

"To think of that," he ejaculated, as the phaeton disappeared, "and I never had any idea of it before this minute. Well, well, I suppose the girls must go some time or other, and I believe he is as good a man as ever lived."

"I am sure of it," returned Mrs. Hatton, warmly; "I wonder if he will speak to her to-day."

"What an extraordinary service the navy is!" said Mrs. Yorke, "I never can understand it."

"How so?" said Mr. Campbell.

"Commanders are always called 'Captain.' What is that for, when 'Commander' is so much prettier?"

"Goodness knows—I don't, Mrs. Yorke."

"And then there is relative rank, which always makes Admiral Hatton so angry."

"Oh," replied the young man, warmly, "*that* is a most confounded shame. (I really beg your pardon, Mrs. Yorke.) Here am I, ranking with a major; and if I go to a party I'll be hanged if every one there doesn't think a vast deal more of some junior captain of a regiment than of me, because I am called Mr."

"But *why* do you rank with a major if you have no title—I mean, no title that you are addressed by?"

"The rule of the service," said Mr. Campbell, with an unpleasant shrug. "I rank with a major, because I am of a certain seniority; a junior lieutenant ranks with a captain in the army."

"It certainly ought to be altered," said Mrs. Yorke, conscious that she herself had thought more of a captain in the army than of a captain in the navy. "And who does a captain in the navy rank with?"

"He ranks with a colonel. Not to bore you with too much detail, the ranks run broadly thus:

ADMIRAL	=	GENERAL,
CAPTAIN	=	COLONEL,
COMMANDER	=	LIEUT.-COLONEL,
LIEUTENANT	=	MAJOR OR CAPTAIN
(according to seniority),		
SUB-LIEUTENANT	=	LIEUTENANT,
MIDSHIPMAN	=	JUNIOR-LIEUTENANT."

"I really wonder, then, that they have not made the same titles of

the same rank," said Mrs. Yorke. "You must forgive my ignorance, Mr. Campbell."

"I would forgive *your* ignorance easily enough," he returned, graciously; "but the worst of it is, it is nearly every civilian's ignorance. The navy has always been misunderstood," he added, having in his heart a real love for his profession.

"You must not say that," said Mrs. Yorke, with a smile. "I assure you we are very proud of our navy, and certainly, just now, of our naval brigade, which has done such good service. And who does the chaplain rank with?"

"He has no rank. The chaplain has no rank," repeated Mr. Campbell, in a loud tone of voice, evidently for Mr. Manley's benefit; but, although the Vicar smiled, he apparently took no heed.

They had left Newforth, and were on the high road which skirted the cliffs forming the shelter of Fisherman's Cove. On their right was a thick wood, a beautiful wood, where wild strawberries grew, full of fine old trees and dense undergrowth, through which paths had been cut; a wood sloping gradually upward until it led, by winding ways, to the higher ground above.

"Do you think you will be able to walk home from here after the day's fatigues are over?" said the Vicar to Ethel, in a low tone.

"I am sure I could, if necessary."

"Will you walk home from this point with *me*?"

She blushed slightly.

"Yes, if you like, Mr. Manley," she replied, in a voice that was almost inaudible.

"You will do so, knowing what I shall have to say to you, Ethel," he returned, looking full into her down-dropped face.

But she was saved from a reply by Mr. Campbell stopping the phaeton and shouting to Mr. Yorke, who, although driving slowly, pulled up with some difficulty, his horses being very fresh.

"Why are we stopping?" asked the Vicar. "Is anything wrong?"

"I suppose you will be very much shocked, Mr. Manley," said Mrs. Yorke; "but I thought we had now made sufficient sacrifice to propriety, and, as I know Mr. Campbell is anxious to drive Miss Hatton, it occurred to me that she and I might change places."

But Mr. Campbell averred that he was not at all anxious to lose his companion, and would prefer going on as they were.

Miss Hatton, on being appealed to on the same subject, declared that she had never enjoyed a drive so much in her life, and that she had had no idea how charming Mr. Yorke was. He took off his hat to her at this speech, with an amused look in his hazel eyes. He was a very handsome man, and, though devotedly attached to his wife, was by no means averse to driving a young lady looking so brilliantly handsome as Miss Hatton on that morning.

Mrs. Yorke laughed.

"You have my full permission to flirt, William," she said; "for my part, I am very happy. In this world it never answers to make a martyr of yourself, for you get no thanks from any one. I simply

made the proposal from a genuine regard to other people's supposed feelings."

"I am quite sure of that," said the Vicar, with a smile.

"Why did we have a mail phaeton to go so short a distance?" asked Ethel.

"I left the arrangement to Mr. Campbell," replied the Vicar.

"He preferred it because Mr. Yorke has one."

"Shall you have to return early?"

"No; I am going to take a holiday to-day—a genuine whole holiday; the first I have had since I have been here. Mr. Rowen has kindly consented to do all my work. This is going to be a red-letter day, I hope, *for us both*," he added, after a short pause; "is it not, Ethel?"

"I hope so," she replied, looking away.

At the hotel they found Captain and Mrs. Vincent, and Mr. and Mrs. Fortescue. Mr. Campbell performed the necessary introductions and went away, reappearing in an incredibly short space of time in uniform.

"How nice you look," exclaimed Miss Hatton, who was not troubled with reserve in company; "doesn't he, Mrs. Yorke?"

Mr. Fortescue smiled, and observed quietly that it was somewhat unfair for one member of a company to have so considerable an advantage over the remainder; but, as that member was soon to be their host on board ship, he supposed they must fain submit to circumstances with a good grace.

Mrs. Yorke said that Mr. Campbell did look very nice, and that, for her part, she had always thought naval uniform very becoming.

The luncheon was very good, and Mr. Campbell certainly did not spare the champagne. Indeed, the Vicar glanced at him once or twice with some anxiety, and Mr. Fortescue gave a sarcastic smile.

The Vicar drank water, and after luncheon took a cup of coffee.

"You abstain on principle, I suppose?" said Mrs. Vincent, who, from old associations, loved clergymen generally, and had been greatly prepossessed in Mr. Manley's favor by his appearance and manner.

"I do."

"*Principle!*" said Mr. Campbell, with a sneer; "I'm tired of hearing about principle; it's humbug. There isn't a single harmless gratification that a man wishes to indulge in but some one talks to him about principle."

The Vicar quietly ignored this speech, which had been very rudely delivered.

They were standing on the balcony of the hotel, which overlooked the sea.

"You are *so* rude," said Miss Hatton. "I give you fair warning I will not speak to you the whole of the day unless you apologize to the Vicar."

"Didn't mean any offence to *you*, Mr. Manley," said Mr. Campbell, sulkily, knowing that Miss Hatton would keep her word if he did not make some amends.

"I have taken no offence," said the Vicar, gravely.

"What ship is that lying off here?" asked Miss Hatton.

Mr. Campbell evaded a reply.

"What ship is that?"

"It isn't a ship."

"What steamer or what *anything* is that, then?"

"It is the *Highflyer*; a gun-vessel."

"The *Highflyer*!" repeated Miss Hatton, her eyes sparkling. "Oh, I am glad; why, that is Captain Worsley's ship."

"I told you it wasn't a ship."

"Whatever sails or steams, and has more than one mast, is a ship," returned Miss Hatton, with decision; "and I shall call it a ship. You must go and ask Captain Worsley to come on board the *Victorious*" (to which ship Mr. Campbell belonged).

"I'll be hanged if I will," he replied.

Mr. Fortescue saw that a quarrel was perilously imminent, and came forward. He objected to quarrels; they were bad form, and interfered with other people's enjoyment. The Vicar also objected to quarrels, but on other grounds; he remained silent, looking grave.

"I speak with profound deference, Miss Hatton," said Mr. Fortescue, "being painfully conscious of my own ignorance, and knowing that I am addressing the daughter of a naval officer; but I should myself have thought that a ship *might* have been differently defined. Pray understand, though, that I am quite open to correction."

"You are quite right," she replied, laughing, "I know I made a very absurd and foolish speech, because I was cross."

"Becomingly cross," said Mr. Fortescue. "An angry woman has a flushed face, and sometimes talks louder than is requisite; a young lady who is a little cross, perhaps with reason, is only *piquante*."

"How nice it is to meet with men like you and Mr. Yorke and Captain Vincent, after living in a small town. With the exception of the Vicar I do not know any young man resident in the place who has a grain of manners," said Miss Hatton, with perhaps more sincerity than wisdom.

"See, Mr. Campbell," said Mr. Manley, with the courteous manner habitual to him, "is there not a boat putting off from your ship?"

"Yes," returned Mr. Campbell; "it is the captain's; I asked him to send it."

Now, it is unusual for a lieutenant to be allowed to send for his friends in the captain's boat, an ordinary gig being the usual arrangement; but Mr. Campbell had taken the precaution to mention who his friends were, and the captain had himself suggested his boat, and stayed on board to receive them, Captain Vincent being a man of so much importance in all the county round. Though a member of no long standing, it had been rumored, and with truth, that the next vacancy in the cabinet would be offered to him.

A lieutenant came on shore with the galley, although this honor was completely thrown away on the entire party, not one of whom, with the exception of Mr. Campbell, being aware that it was a com-

pliment to them, and he would have preferred its being dispensed with.

"This is a *beautiful* boat," said Mrs. Vincent, looking at the gay flags spread over the seats.

The lieutenant, one Mr. Annesley, smiled.

"Isn't it a boat?" asked Mrs. Vincent, with a most winning smile.

"I am very ignorant on such matters."

"It is certainly a boat," replied Mr. Annesley.

"I am given to understand, on the best authority," said Mr. Fortescue, "that the time-honored phrases and expressions attributed to the British navy are nothing more than pitfalls now, in which to entrap unwary civilians who may use them into displaying their ignorance. For my own part, I shall be quite ready to believe whatever I am told, and I think it would be strongly advisable that I should not be told much."

"You shall not be told too much, sir," said Mr. Annesley, quite unaware that Mr. Fortescue had taken many a voyage, even on board a man-of-war occasionally, and was thoroughly conversant with the usages of the navy.

"Keep her away," said Mr. Campbell, who was not steering; "what are you going so near the *Highflyer* for?"

But the caution came too late, they were close beside her; and, what was more, Captain Worsley himself was on deck watching the boat. He caught sight at once of the Misses Hatton, and took off his cap and waved it enthusiastically.

"Are you going on board the *Victorious*?" he asked, his face as bright as it well could be.

"Yes," replied Mr. Campbell.

"I will be after you in a quarter of an hour," he replied.

Miss Hatton's face had crimsoned, her eyes shone. "How little he is changed!" she said. "How glad I shall be to see him."

"More naval men!" said Mr. Fortescue; "it is really rather hard on Mr. Manley, Mr. Yorke, and myself, who have not even been in the army."

"You shouldn't say even in the army," said Mrs. Vincent, who was very tenacious about her husband's late service.

"My dear Mrs. Vincent, I will say whatever you please, and will say it *how* you please, so long as I am not expected to say that *I* wish to be in the army or navy."

"Or the church," put in Mr. Campbell.

"Or the church," said Mr. Fortescue, lazily.

It was something, from disuse, almost in the nature of a new experience to the Vicar to go into a society where the church was not the prominent subject of conversation, and he himself the most important man present. He listened to the conversation in silence, and was conscious that he vastly preferred the society of two or three clever men to that of a mixed assembly, such as the present. He was not thinking of himself, but of Ethel now; he wanted to be alone with her, and would be glad when this should be the case.

The captain and officers of the *Victorious* received them with all

that geniality and kindness so common to the navy. Under any circumstances the ladies would have been paid attention, but they were, without exception, such remarkably pretty women that extra courtesy was bestowed on them.

The captain requested that they would take tea in his cabin.

"You shall do the honors, Mr. Campbell," he said, genially. "I know it is your party."

"It doesn't seem much like it," muttered that young man, inaudibly; "every one else seems to come before me."

And now Captain Worsley came on board, and was most cordially welcomed. He was a fine, smart-looking young man, with a brisk manner and gait, a keen, honest face, pointed nose, and fair hair. He was much addicted to fox-hunting, and always had a couple of hunters in his possession when in England. The officers on board the *Victorious*, whom he had not seen since his return from Africa, shook hands with him as if they would have wrung his hands off.

Mr. Fortescue looked on with an amused smile.

"There is only one drawback to naval officers," he remarked, quietly.

"What is that?" asked his wife.

"They are so *awfully* glad to see you."

"That is a fault on the right side," remarked the Vicar.

"Just listen," said Mr. Fortescue. On all sides were heard, "Awfully glad to see you, old man," "Awfully delighted to welcome you, my boy," and so on.

"He must be a great favorite," said Mrs. Fortescue, "and he is a very nice-looking young man."

Captain Worsley was now in full conversation with Miss Hatton.

"How awfully well you are looking!" he exclaimed.

"And so are you."

"Are you glad to see me?"

"I am very glad," and more to the same purport.

The afternoon was now drawing to a close. Mrs. Vincent suggested re-embarking, as they would have a long drive home.

"Where is the Vicar?" asked Miss Hatton.

The Vicar was discovered on the lower deck, talking pleasantly to the men, and asking questions relative to the ship.

"You understand these matters better than I do, Yorke," he said; "you have taken so many voyages. You have never told me any particulars of your shipwreck on that desert island."

But this was a subject on which Mr. Yorke was by no means disposed to enter, his existence on the island having been the most miserable time of his life.

"We have enjoyed our day very much, Mr. Campbell," said Mrs. Vincent at the hotel to the young man, who was calling for more champagne; "and you must come and see us soon at Orton."

But this invitation was not seconded by Captain Vincent, who considered that Mr. Campbell had not behaved at all well.

The champagne was brought, and refused by all the rest of the party. Mr. Campbell himself drank a tumblerful.

Captain Worsley had accompanied the party ashore, and, uniform notwithstanding, asked if he could return with the Newforth people, in order to visit Admiral and Mrs. Hatton.

"I will give you a seat with pleasure," said Mr. Yorke.

Captain and Mrs. Vincent, and Mr. and Mrs. Fortescue, then departed, but not before Mrs. Vincent had asked if they might, one day, be allowed to see the church at Newforth, and the beautiful window of which they had heard so much; to which the Vicar had responded with a most cordial assent.

The order of going was once more to be decided on. Mr. Manley informed Mr. Yorke that he should feel obliged if he would drive himself and Ethel, leaving Mrs. Yorke and Miss Hatton to the care of the young men. But Mr. Yorke had been eying Mr. Campbell, and had decided that he was not in a fit condition to drive.

He spoke a word aside to Captain Worsley.

"I say, old fellow," said the latter, "let me drive." Now, he was a noted whip.

"I am going to drive myself," returned Mr. Campbell, rudely.

"You can drive *yourself*," said Mr. Yorke; "but you must excuse my remarking that I do not wish you to drive Mrs. Yorke."

"Who wants—" he was beginning, when Captain Worsley put his hand on his shoulder, and shoved him out at the door. He turned round furious.

"It was only a joke," said Captain Worsley, with good-humor.

The Vicar now interposed.

"You asked me if I would drive here, and I declined, Mr. Campbell. What do you say to sitting behind with Miss Hatton, and allowing me to hand over the reins—for it is my turn to drive—to Captain Worsley, whom Mrs. Yorke will accompany."

This speech had the desired effect: Mr. Campbell put Miss Hatton in, and got up grumbling.

"You are behaving disgracefully," she said; "if it were not for the example of Captain Worsley, and all those nice men we have seen to-day, I should really feel ashamed to think that you represented a naval officer."

"Upon my word!" he replied, savagely; "how many more insults?"

"Oh, I mean to speak," returned the girl, quickly. "You have had too much champagne, and you know it. If you taste one drop of anything except tea or coffee or water to-night, you shall never come to our house again."

This speech went a long way towards sobering Mr. Campbell, who knew that in Captain Worsley he had a most serious rival to fear.

"Take the lead, Captain Worsley," said Mr. Yorke, instigated by the Vicar.

He, Captain Worsley, drove off at a rattling pace, although he called the horses a couple of screws.

"I hope you like fast driving, Mrs. Yorke," he said.

"I love it," she rejoined.

Mr. Yorke's horses were as fresh as in the morning, but he drove

slowly, and allowed the other vehicle to get out of sight. Mr. Manley had confided to him his intentions, and at the entrance to the wood Mr. Yorke drew up.

The Vicar lifted Ethel down.

"Good-bye, Miss Ethel," said Yorke, with a laugh in his eyes; "and, as my horses are so fresh, I think I will take them by the other road out of Newforth for a run, so that, if any accident *should* detain you on your road home, you will not be inquired for until they see me."

CHAPTER XII.

A DECLARATION.

THE sun was declining when the Vicar and Ethel entered the woods. They were such quiet woods; such lovely, lonely woods. The sunlight glinted through the boughs of the trees, which had not lost their fresh green tint. It was cool, sweet, and peaceful; and as they gained the shelter of the thickets, and left the broad track for one of the narrow winding paths, he put out his hand and took hers.

He did not speak, neither did she. For some time they wandered on, her hand in his, crushing the wild strawberries beneath their feet unheeded, and passing by ferns and bracken and bramble-bushes in full blossom.

The birds were singing over their heads; the tall trees of elm and oak and mountain ash and horse-chestnut waved gently above them. Here and there they caught glimpses of the sea, far below.

He did not wish to speak; she could not. But though there were no outward words, they were not silent; he knew that he was expressing his thoughts as plainly as in language, and that she was answering them. There was perfect understanding between them. Now he realized, for the first time since he had attained his full manhood, that though a man may be a clergyman, though he may have schooled and disciplined himself in every way to resist temptation, though he may even be a saint—yet that, when once the full tide of love sweeps over him, he is carried out of himself, and is capable of speaking words which in his ordinary moments he would consider himself to be quite incapable of uttering. The Vicar knew that at this moment he could have repeated much of the Song of Solomon. He remained silent until they had reached an open glade, where the turf was short and crisp, and the trees almost formed a circle. And then he looked at her face, and as he looked he knew that love is given of God, and that there was neither sense nor reason in not enjoying to the uttermost that best gift of the Creator. His cares had all rolled away from him for the time, and he was rejoicing in his sense of the greatness and the holiness and the joy and the golden light of *love*. And then he took her in his arms, saying only, "My well-beloved!"

Their imaginations were both now so far removed from the tangi-

ble things of earth—their thoughts, owing to the witchery of the hour and the scene, so etherealized—that he felt he *could* not turn to her and say, “Will you marry me?” neither was it necessary that he should; they were passing through an experience known generally but once in a lifetime—to many never known at all—the communion of spirit. And then he removed his arms, and, again taking her hand, led her gently upward through the narrow paths, until they had reached the brow of the hill, and the wide country opened in front of them. He told her to sit down. She did so, resting her head against the trunk of a tree; he threw himself down on the grass, leaning on one elbow. And then they both returned to realities.

He turned his head, and saw the blue sea—so wonderfully, so marvellously blue—the sky-line meeting the waters imperceptibly. The vessels were passing and repassing. The scene was very lovely; the sun, now low, sending his brilliantly colored rays over the broad expanse of the wavelets.

“Look, Ethel!” he said, gently.

She turned and looked.

“And now,” he said, with a glow on his face and a light in his eyes, “I will say what I ought to have begun by saying, but what you know perfectly well already: I love you, Ethel! Will you be my wife?”

“You know I will,” she returned, placing her ungloved hand in his.

“I do know it. Have we not been talking to one another in the woods yonder?”

“But that is like mesmerism,” she urged.

“Whatever it is like, it has been an actual experience, has it not? Do you think, if I were to talk to you for half an hour, that you would understand me any better?”

“No.”

“Neither do I. I really think it has had its uses: it has taught me that we do *not* grow out of what I once thought we did; I even think I shall be able to understand that very—what shall I call it—that very intense poetry of yours.”

“Oh, don’t call it intense,” she said, laughing, “because intense—I don’t use the word in its slang sense, but in its literal—intense people and things are generally so very uncomfortable.”

“Are they? Well, although I am not a lover of poetry of the ardent kind—though I greatly appreciate some poetry which has deeper thought in it—a curious idea passed through my mind while we were in the wood.”

“What was it?”

“That one of these days—when we are married, perhaps—if I wanted to be *quite* sure of your unchangeable affection, I should like you to say to me three lines out of that very poem that I read in your drawing-room, and despised so much; they were

“‘I will grow round him in his place,
Grow, live, die looking on his face,
Die, dying clasped in his embrace.’”

Now, who that knows me in this parish, or any other parish, could credit me with such an absurd desire?"

"I think my affection will be unchangeable, Mr. Manley, even if I do not repeat the poetry," said Ethel, with her eyes on the ground.

"But ought we not to be going home?"

"I think not, I am sure not. It is my one holiday, remember; the only one in a year. To-morrow I must work, and dream no longer."

"And forget me?"

"And *not* forget you; but I am not going to be foolish and sentimental after to-day. I must try to be stern towards you."

"Why?"

"Only lest in being good to you I should be good to myself—too good, I mean," he said, smiling. "But I am afraid, if I try, I shall not succeed."

"You cannot but succeed in anything you try, Mr. Manley."

"Is it your intention to call me 'Mr. Manley' when we are married?"

"I don't know," she answered, coloring.

"I have a Christian name, you know."

"Oh," she replied, energetically, "I *couldn't* say Theophilus."

"And is 'Phil' such a very difficult name to say?" he asked, the kind smile still on his face. "I was always called 'Phil' when I was a boy; I am now by my relations."

"I think I could say 'Phil,'" she answered, shyly. "'Phil' is such a nice name, I think; it is short and manly and easy to say."

"Say it, then."

"Yes—'Phil.'"

"That was a very long pause."

"Because I want to tell you something and I don't like."

"What is it?"

"I have seen you nearly every day in church in your surplice, and there you look so—I can't find the right word—it isn't grand, and it isn't imposing or handsome or lofty or intellectual, and yet it is a mixture of all these—in a sense, you know; and you seem so unapproachable, and yet here you are sitting down by me, just as if I were equal to you, and telling me you love me, and asking me to call you 'Phil.' I *can't* understand it."

"Do you think any human being ever does thoroughly understand the mysterious changes that love works? I know that even yesterday I did not. But if I am to be considered grand, and imposing, and intellectual, and unapproachable, and—handsome," he laughed as he said the word, "I shall have to be angry with you."

"Do you dislike it, really, Mr.—Phil?" she asked, earnestly, and in some trepidation.

"I should dislike it very much from any other person, and consider it all nonsense; but, though I know I ought to dislike it in you, somehow I—don't."

"But perhaps you will expect me to understand theology and church matters and so many things, and I don't understand them—Phil."

"I don't think I want to marry a Mrs. Proudie," he returned; "I only want my wife to love me."

"No one will be able to do that better than I," she said, earnestly, her heart shining in her eyes; "and I know that you are quite learned and intellectual, and theological and good, and kind enough for us both."

"This style of conversation I expressly forbid," he said, with a smile. "Seriously, Ethel, my darling, you must not put temptation in my way, by overrating me. You will hinder, and not help me."

"I will try not, Phil"—the word came so naturally now—"but it will be so *very* difficult," she said, earnestly.

"Then, being your clergyman and spiritual head, and knowing that you acknowledge the authority of the Church to the uttermost, this is the penance I shall impose on you."

"I will try not," she replied, humbly, "but—but—may I just tell you what I really do think of you perhaps once a year?"

The Vicar laughed.

"Perhaps you may—say, on Christmas Day."

On the Christmas Day ensuing he thought of this speech in bitterness of spirit; she had told him what she thought of him before then.

"And now I think we really must be going," he continued, "for it is getting very late. But it may be a long time before I have so many hours with you again; we have been together all day, my darling. Now, before we go on to the upper path, where at any moment we are liable to meet people, give me my first kiss." And as he kissed her he said again, "My well-beloved!"

"Have you ever been in love before, Phil?" she asked, anxiously.

"Well, yes," he replied, smiling at her earnestness.

"With whom?"

"That will be penance No. 2. I see you are jealous; you must try to curb your jealousy. (You see, *I* am not going to flatter *you*.) I was in love with a girl of ten when I was eleven years old—that was a very desperate affair; and I was in love when I was twenty with a widow of thirty-five; that also was desperate, but not *so* desperate."

"But you didn't like them as well as me, Phil?" she asked, appealingly.

"It may seem a little ungracious, my darling," he said, gravely; "but I do, at this first beginning of our engagement, *beg* you will not be jealous. Do you not *know* how much I love you? do you not know *me*? If so, then, will there, can there, be any cause for jealousy? As to the past, I have never loved any one so much as you; and, for the future, I do not think you need fear. Trust me, Ethel; above all things, trust me."

"I will, Phil, I trust you far before myself." And then she turned to him with a wistful look on her face, "You will be patient with me, Phil, won't you? and you will try to teach me to be more worthy of you."

But to this question he gave no reply in words.

"It seems to me," she continued, "as if I had been engaged to you a long while. This morning I should not have ventured to say much, and now I feel as if I could tell you *anything*. Do you know that for some time past, until quite lately, I fancied you were in trouble of some sort."

"I was in trouble, much trouble, but I hope it is now over. How did you find it out?"

"I read it in your face."

"I must say," he returned, with a smile, "that it is rather hard on a clergyman that he can never—to use a very vulgar but graphic expression—keep himself to himself. Whether he be ill or well, joyful or sorrowful, he can never be in the shade; he is criticised and discussed and pulled to pieces—"

"And *adored*, Phil," interposed Ethel.

"This will never do," he said; but he looked very happy. "I must indeed be stern with you."

"It is only to-day; I won't say it after to-day; really I won't."

"I think I should indeed be a tyrant if I did not allow you to say what you pleased to-day; but it must be only to-day, remember."

They were now walking through fields of green corn, on the summit of the upper cliff. They looked down on the town and the beautiful sea, now gorgeous with the setting sun.

"How thankful I am to be alone sometimes—that is, alone with you," he said, for the continual buzz of small talk, and attentions of the ladies, and perpetual little calls on his time and services for trivial matters, at times tried him sorely.

"There is the dear old church," he continued. "Look, Ethel."

"Have you not found it very uphill work sometimes; all your labor among the people?"

"Sometimes it has pressed on me very heavily; I have felt very discouraged. But I now see every reason for hoping that my worst difficulties are at an end. I think happiness is before me, Ethel—great happiness. Now, before I speak to your father, tell me if there be any objection on your part to our being married in September—in three months' time, that is."

"I don't know," she answered, shyly.

"Then I take it for granted there is none. I want my wife, Ethel; I am very lonely sometimes, in spite of my busy life."

She looked up at him, her eyes full of sympathy.

"Your face grows on any one in a wonderful manner," he said, looking at her critically. "When I first saw you, I simply thought you were pretty, but now—"

"Well—"

"Now, I am not going to tell you what I think," he answered, laughing.

In the lane outside Admiral Hatton's garden they found Mr. Yorke, walking up and down, smoking.

"I have been waiting for you," he said.

"Have you been here long?"

"Oh dear, no," he replied coolly, "only an hour and a half."

"But why did you wait?" asked the Vicar; "it surely was not necessary."

"The fact is, when I went home my wife told me that the Admiral—you must excuse me, Miss Ethel—was in a great rage, and was as likely as not to pitch into the first person he came across; and as I knew *you* wouldn't put up with that, Manley, I thought it would save any unpleasantness, and look more respectable, if we all three went in together."

"I am much obliged to you," said the Vicar, "but I cannot see any reason why Admiral Hatton should be annoyed with *me*; I told him I should bring Ethel home myself."

"There isn't the smallest reason," said Yorke, with a slight shrug; "but angry people are not always reasonable, and when you *do* ask a man for his daughter—I really beg your pardon for assuming so much—" (the Vicar smiled)—"you may as well not give him any possible pretext for affronting you."

"But what made my father angry?" asked Ethel.

"He was in high good-humor—so my wife tells me—at seeing the two young men return in uniform, and began to talk to them. During the conversation Miss Hatton and Captain Worsley slipped away and went into the garden. This annoyed Mr. Campbell so much that he forgot himself, and argued very rudely with your father, declaring that the navy was improved now in every possible way, and that the old school of naval officers, who were always saying that the navy was going to the dogs, were—he did not actually say so, but he implied it—fools. This put your father into a towering rage, during which my wife came away, and I thought I might as well wait for you."

But Admiral Hatton had completely recovered his good-humor when they entered, and was deep in conversation with Captain Worsley on the subject of torpedoes. This young man then took his leave, saying,

"So awfully glad to have seen you all; so sorry I have to go to Plymouth to-morrow. But I shall be back again soon."

He gave a longing glance at Miss Hatton, who walked down the garden with him.

"I shall be so awfully delighted to return," were his last words.

The Vicar's interview with Admiral Hatton was very short, but eminently satisfactory. The Admiral expressed himself much honored and gratified that a man bearing so high a character as Mr. Manley should wish to marry his daughter, and he only regretted that he had not a penny to give with her.

The Vicar averred that the honor was on his side, and that he had no wish for money, as a fortune in a wife was better than a fortune with a wife.

CHAPTER XIII.

IMPENDING TROUBLE.

THERE was a great failure in a London bank. This was caused by the daring thefts of the manager, one Mr. Carter, who, before the directors' very eyes, had abstracted bonds and securities of enormous value, replacing them by worthless papers. He had been so long in the bank, and was so fully trusted by the directors, that they had failed to observe the ordinary and requisite precautions, and he had taken the fullest advantage of their confidence.

He had now disappeared, no one knew whither, and all efforts of the police to trace him being in vain, it was supposed he had gone abroad. His forgeries had been so many, his embezzlements so great, that it was well known that, when taken, his sentence must be penal servitude for life.

Mr. Leslie lost a very large sum of money in consequence, and was in high wrath.

"I hope if the scoundrel is taken, he will be hung. Hanging is too good for him," he exclaimed. "To say nothing of what *I* have lost, and others like me, look at the number of widows and orphans he has reduced to poverty!"

But it may be questioned whether Mr. Leslie would have felt the wrongs of the widows and orphans quite so much, had it not been for his own! As it was, he was compelled to give up his large house and take a small one; indeed, he had to make many sacrifices of personal comfort which annoyed him greatly.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Leslie to the Vicar, "that you will not visit us often now."

"Why should I not visit you?" he asked, gravely.

"I didn't really mean it, Mr. Manley," she rejoined. "I know the size of our house could make no possible difference to you, and that you are far more disposed to visit the poor than the rich; but if you had a wife or relations I question whether they would look on it in the same light. I do not, of course, refer to Ethel; I mean if you were married before"—for the news of the Vicar's engagement was known all over Newforth.

"I do not see why it should make any difference either to my wife or my relations."

Mrs. Leslie laughed.

"No, but *they* would. It is wonderful how soon most clergymen's families find you out if you keep a carriage, and how long a time it takes them to ascertain that you are of the same birth with themselves if you do not live in a large house."

Unfortunately, the Vicar could not controvert this statement; he held his peace.

In spite of the deep happiness his engagement had given him, some cloud seemed again over him; there were lines of care on his brow very often when alone.

After speaking to Admiral Hatton on the evening of his engagement, he had gone into the church, as was his wont when deeply moved—for he always carried the key of the vestry with him—and, standing before his beautiful window, had found himself almost overwhelmed with the happiness that had befallen him. On every side blessings seemed to have sprung up around him. He found himself repeating, "For love is of God."

He had risen early the next morning and gone on the beach, had watched the fishing-boats depart, and noted the glorious sunlight on the sea, the fresh sparkle of the waves, the salt, delicious odor of the seaweed lying in heaps on the shingle.

Once more he leaped from rock to rock, and, looking at the scene before him, exclaimed with Milton,

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good.

Hail, universal Lord! be bounteous still, to give us only good."

It certainly was not the most direct way home, but some impulse made him return by Admiral Hatton's house. There, in the garden, were the two girls enjoying the warm sunshine before breakfast.

Miss Hatton came forward and opened the gate, saying,

"I am so very glad, Mr. Manley, about you and Ethel," to which he warmly responded.

"Who is going to give me a rose?" he asked.

Ethel gathered one.

"Pin it in his button-hole, Ethel," said her sister.

"Clergymen don't wear button-holes," returned Ethel, her eyes shining.

"Then I will be the exception," said the Vicar, "for I will wear your rose now."

Miss Hatton duly retired while a little private conversation took place.

"I must go now," he said, after a few minutes.

"Very well," said Ethel.

He went out of the gate, and then she called him back.

"What is it?"

"Another time, when a brother clergyman disappoints you, you need not apologize so humbly to the congregation as you did last Wednesday. You know they *all* prefer you to any stranger," she said, with a laugh.

He shook his head and went away.

"Upon my word," said Miss Hatton, "your intimacy must have made enormous strides since yesterday! How you could venture to say that, I don't know; *I* shouldn't, as it was about church arrangements."

"I could venture to say *anything* to him now," returned Ethel, in the full consciousness of her power.

So a week had passed most joyously; so happily that the Vicar began actually to be afraid of the absorbing passion that love was becoming to him, and to fight against it as a temptation. And then had come this trouble from outside which tempered his great gladness, and told him how powerless we are to clip the wings of happiness.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SPIRE.

A MEETING for the purpose of raising the spire fund was now announced.

Notwithstanding his numerous engagements, the Vicar had never lost sight of this object, and had sounded some of the richer members of his congregation as to what they felt inclined to contribute. He now felt justified in calling a meeting, to be held at the Town Hall.

He did not purpose making this sectarian. He had always, as far as possible, worked most amicably with the Dissenting ministers, and shown them much kindness; and on this occasion, in addition to visiting the mayor and the lord of the manor, Lord Hilton, he had begged the ministers of other denominations to support him. The work was to some extent a public one, as the spire would become so prominent a sea-mark, also a very great ornament to the entire neighborhood. Under these circumstances he did not feel that the entire cost, which was considerable, should be borne alone by his congregation. It was his wish also to transfer the bell of the clock, supplying one of greater power that could be heard at sea, and to make the clock chime the half-hours and quarters. This, he thought, could be done. He anxiously desired a peal of bells, which he knew would greatly add to the glory he would feel in the spire, but this he did not allow himself to consider possible to obtain.

He constantly visited Mr. and Mrs. Yorke, with the former of whom he had long conversations respecting his schemes. Now, Mr. Yorke, being the son of a canon and having been brought up in a clerical element, could give his opinion with a certain amount of authority, although he made no professions as to church work. It was by his advice that Captain Vincent and Mr. Fortescue were invited to the meeting. "They are both so wealthy that they can help largely if they please," said Mr. Yorke.

"But," replied the Vicar, "though I do earnestly desire to see the spire on the tower, I do not wish to make it an occasion of begging—of passing round the hat to rich men. I want the work to be done spontaneously, to be a worthy *offering*. I cannot think it either right or advisable in such a matter as this to ask people to give from motives of private friendship."

"I respect your scruples, Phil, but I do not share them," said Mr. Yorke, who sometimes called his friend by his Christian name, they having been Westminster boys together. "Do you want Vincent and Fortescue down here, or do you not?"

"I shall be very glad to see them. I consider Captain Vincent a most proper person to be present, being so prominent a man among us. All I wish you to understand is, that I am not going to ask them to contribute. If they offer to do so out of a genuine feeling of interest, and a wish to serve us, that is quite another affair."

"Pride, my dear Manley; all pride," returned Mr. Yorke, who, though most genial, was at heart a very proud man in some respects.

The Vicar smiled.

"No, it isn't pride; you don't understand."

"I dare say not."

The two men were walking up and down the Vicar's garden; Ethel and her sister went by. They saw them across the road.

"That is a very nice girl—Ethel, I mean," said Mr. Yorke; "and I wish you joy, with all my heart, Phil. They are both nice girls."

The Vicar watched until they were out of sight.

"I trust our marriage will not have to be postponed," he said, with a sigh. "You will think me foolish, I dare say, Yorke; but I tell you I am actually counting each day as it goes by."

"I do not think you at all foolish, Phil," replied Mr. Yorke, kindly. "I remember how impatient I was; and if you are only as happy as I am, you will be a very happy man. But if you take my advice, you will not put off your marriage on any consideration; in my opinion, it would be most unadvisable."

"But," said the Vicar, "in common honesty, ought I to marry her without telling her all? and you know I *cannot* tell her. My most solemn word has been passed."

Now Yorke was a man of scrupulous honor. He considered a moment.

"Were she to know all the circumstances, do you think she would have the smallest hesitation in marrying you?" he asked.

"I do not think she would," replied the Vicar, readily, remembering the many, many speeches declaring her great love that she had made since her engagement.

"If you are sure on that point, why hesitate?" said Yorke. "Marry her; the fault is none of yours."

And then ensued some very earnest conversation.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SPIRE MEETING.

THE large Town Hall was well filled on the occasion of the meeting. The audience began to wax impatient when eight o'clock struck. Five minutes later Lord Hilton appeared at the end of the

room, followed by the mayor, Captain Vincent, the Vicar, the curate, the church-wardens, various members of importance in the congregation, several brother clergymen, and dissenting ministers. These all took their places on the platform. Mr. Fortescue and Mr. Yorke were among the audience, with their wives.

Mrs. Fortescue had requested as a special favor that her husband would not go on the platform, where he had been offered a place.

"You will look so dreadfully amused and sarcastic, Arthur, if any one should drop his h's or speak in bad grammar."

"It is rather hard that I should not be amused, I think," he had responded, lazily. "As a rule, these meetings are the reverse of amusing. I always take care to stroke my mustache when any specially salient point is brought to my notice; but even should I omit to do so, I warrant you they will forgive me any amount of smiles if I hand them over a check for thirty pounds, which is what I purpose doing."

"I am not at all sure that the Vicar would condone your offences, if you gave a hundred pounds, dear. He would refuse it on the spot if he thought you were turning anything into ridicule."

Mr. Fortescue shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"Have it your own way, Maud; deprive me of the seat where, perhaps, I *might* get a little fresh air."

"Oh, no, Arthur, if that is the reason," Mrs. Fortescue began earnestly; but her husband laughed, and said nothing should now prevent him from sitting among the audience.

Mr. Yorke had already promised twenty-five pounds; he was by no means so rich as his two friends.

"Twenty-five will buy you a seat on the platform, Yorke."

"I *wish* you wouldn't, Mr. Fortescue," said Mrs. Vincent, who was sitting with Mrs. Yorke and Mrs. Fortescue. "You are laughing at everything. It is too bad when Mr. Manley is so earnest about it; I do admire him so much."

"I should not give thirty pounds to an object I ridiculed," returned Mr. Fortescue, more gravely; "and I have seen quite enough of Mr. Manley to have thoroughly made up my mind about him."

The Vincents and Fortescues had driven in from Orton that afternoon, and dined early with the Yorkes. They were to sleep at the hotel. The Vicar had also been invited to dinner, but had declined.

Lord Hilton, who presided, was the first to address the meeting. He was a fine old man, vigorous and hearty, and somewhat old-fashioned in speech and manner. He told the people that he had laid the foundation-stone of the church a very great many years ago, when he was a young man. How, in the first instance, Newforth being then simply a fishing-village, the chancel only had been built; but, he said, the inhabitants, though few and by no means rich, had been generous, and had freely given their utmost, so that, by degrees—the original plan of the church being strictly adhered to—the nave and side chapels had been added. He remembered, he said, being called there early one morning, when the chancel only was built, to see what could be done, as the high arch was giving way, it was

feared. He himself ascended the ladders, and assisted in throwing down some tons of stone, after which the arch was temporarily shored up, and afterwards permanently strengthened. He detailed the efforts of the increasing inhabitants to build the tower, and spoke of their earnest wish to provide a spire. And then, he said, a period of deadness seemed to have fallen on the inhabitants, he would not say why or wherefore; but now, owing to the unceasing efforts of their good Vicar, of whose good works he could not speak in sufficient praise (the Vicar looked excessively uncomfortable), this deadness had been removed, and the parish was more full of life and zeal and earnestness than almost any other of his acquaintance. He begged, in conclusion, to assure them of his hearty support and goodwill, to inform them how pleased he was to see the meeting so largely attended, and to be supported on the platform by representatives of so many different bodies. Lord Hilton sat down amid loud applause.

The Vicar then addressed the meeting in few and well-chosen words. After thanking the chairman for his kind words, he said he thought it his duty to tell those present that Lord Hilton had given the ground on which the church was built, and that he had now put down on the table a check for one hundred pounds. He then added a few words relative to the important sea-mark the spire would become, and some others of pleasure at the representative character of the meeting. Loud applause followed.

Captain Vincent then proposed the first resolution, "That the spire be built without further delay," which was duly seconded and supported.

"How well Rupert speaks," said Mrs. Vincent, who considered her husband the wonder of the age. "All he says is so clear and so well put."

The business of the meeting then went forward.

"It seems to me," said Mr. Fortescue, "that this meeting is nothing less than a mutual admiration society. Every one admires everything and everybody, and praises everything and agrees to everything. I have not heard one dissentient voice. It would add vastly to the interest if some one would get up and make himself obnoxious. Should no one else come forward I really think I must."

He had, in the meantime, since hearing the statistics, and being made aware of the good that was being done and was still to do in the parish, quietly altered his check into one for sixty pounds; for pens and ink were handy.

But when the mayor began to speak, Mr. Fortescue promised himself some real amusement, and laughed outright when, in speaking of the work going forward, he invariably observed, "The Vicar and me," did this or that.

"I was not aware that Mr. Manley had an additional curate in the mayor," he said, gravely.

"The mayor hasn't done a single thing," said Mrs. Yorke. "The only point in his favor is that he has abstained from being actively disagreeable."

"There is not an *h* in his composition," said Mr. Fortescue; "and some of the Newforth ministers are decidedly wanting in final *g*'s."

"But they are all so earnest and hearty," said Mrs. Vincent, warmly. "I am sure it quite does me good to hear them! Compare them with London society, our society, and see how immeasurably they are superior to us in what is good."

"I protest against this, Mrs. Vincent; I protest warmly; I am satisfied with *my* society, *they* are satisfied with *their* society. Why then quarrel? I like final *g*'s; *they* do not care about them. 'Live and let live,' say I; therefore I do not see why comparisons—humiliating to me—should be instituted. I never professed to be anything but a very inferior individual."

"Oh, Arthur!" from Mrs. Fortescue.

"Mr. Rowen has actually been induced to be on the platform," said Mrs. Yorke. "I do wish he were not so dreadfully melancholy. But he has taken care to sit behind Mr. Leslie, so that he cannot be seen."

"How well Mr. Manley looks!" said Mrs. Vincent; "he has such a fresh, bright face."

"Looks as if he had just come from taking a header?" said Mr. Fortescue. "Yes, I think he does. Where is his young lady?"

"Over there," said Mrs. Yorke, pointing to a group of the Hatton family and Mrs. Leslie.

"She is a very pretty girl," said Mr. Fortescue.

"And a very nice girl," remarked Mr. Yorke.

The meeting closed amid expressions of loud applause and satisfaction, but not before Mr. Leslie, in a very good and humorous speech, had informed the audience that he had no doubt they should soon raise the money by small subscriptions, as one little girl had given a penny, and another fourpence; to which the Vicar replied that he was delighted to hear it, and he should be quite as proud of the pence of children and of the poor as of the largest subscriptions of the rich."

At the entrance door was a book, in which persons present might inscribe their names and promises of subscriptions.

Captain Vincent was on the point of writing down his name for one hundred pounds when his wife checked him, and beckoned to him to speak to her apart.

"Rupert, dear," she said, earnestly, "don't write down your name until you hear what I should like to do."

Mrs. Vincent had been strangely moved during the meeting when she had heard of the poor, neglected, untidy parish church, and then of the successful efforts to restore it to beauty and order. She thought of their own well-kept church, and of the abundant means always forthcoming to keep it in repair. She determined that she would make an effort to help the Vicar of Newforth, whom she was beginning to like and respect so much. She always took an extreme interest in church matters, owing to the late rector of Orton having been her dearest friend until his death.

"What would you like to do?" asked her husband.

Now, Mrs. Vincent had been a wealthy heiress before her marriage; but she had given all her money absolutely to her husband.

"What would a peal of bells cost?"

He considered a moment.

"Perhaps a thousand pounds; but I really don't know. Ask Mr. Manley."

"The Newforth people can raise the spire, but they can't get the peal of bells. May I have some money to do what I like with, dear—five hundred pounds, say; and I will pay the rest out of my allowance."

Her husband laughed.

"We have now been married some years, my child," he said—for he invariably addressed his wife thus when pleased—"and during all that time you have never asked me for any large sum of money, although it was your money. You shall have a thousand pounds at once; it is only taking what is your own. Your allowance, indeed! Don't let me hear anything so ridiculous."

"You are very good, Rupert. Perhaps now you will not care to give to the spire fund."

"I shall not give so much as I should otherwise have done; I will put down my name for twenty pounds."

"But there is another difficulty," said his wife. "Mr. Manley may not choose to accept our gift."

"He can but decline it," returned Captain Vincent; "but I do not think he will."

CHAPTER XVI.

A HANDSOME PRESENT.

THE next morning the Vicar showed Mrs. Vincent the church and the window. The rest of the party had suggested accompanying her, but she had asked to be alone, in order that she might speak to Mr. Manley by herself.

"I shall have to look after you, if this goes on," said her husband, laughing.

"My dear Vincent," said Mr. Fortescue, "I will back your and my attractions against those of any number of vicars, let our wives see as many of them as they please."

"You say so because Mrs. Fortescue's tastes do not run in the direction of vicars," returned Captain Vincent. "Now, with *my* wife it is quite another matter."

"Rupert!" said Mrs. Vincent. "I wish you wouldn't."

He laughed.

"Go your own way, my child; we won't disturb your private conference. It is time to start now; he said he would be at the church by eleven. We might go and see the Yorkes, and drop you on our way."

The Vicar, as usual, was punctual to a moment. As the clock struck eleven, he appeared and opened the doors.

After due admiration had been bestowed on the window, Mrs. Vincent turned to him a little nervously, for she was doubtful as to the manner in which her offer would be received.

"Have you any hope of getting a peal of bells?" she asked.

"I cannot say I have," he replied, cheerfully; "but I like to hope."

"But you will get the spire for yourselves."

"Oh, yes; every one really is so very kind, and seems inclined to make sacrifices so willingly. The original plans of the architect are in our possession, and one of the gentlemen of my congregation, who is a most skilful architect, has promised to carry them out free of cost as to architect's fees, and my kind church-warden, Mr. Leslie, has told me he will conduct any law business in connection with the work free of charge." For, owing to his recent losses, Mr. Leslie could not give much in money.

"Mr. Manley," said Mrs. Vincent, with a very sweet smile, "are you one of those people who feel proud and offended at being offered anything—although that thing may be one on which they have set their heart?"

"I trust that is not your estimate of my character," he returned, kindly. "I think it is very often difficult to receive gifts gracefully, more so than to make them; but it is a most ungracious act not to accept a kind present in the spirit in which it is offered."

"I am so glad," she replied, joyfully, "because I want to make you a present—that is to say, your church."

"You are very kind, what is it?"

"The peal of bells."

Now, the magnitude of this present at first almost startled the Vicar; he had been expecting an offer of a new altar cloth or something of that sort. He turned the matter rapidly over in his mind, and decided that it would be both unwise and ungracious to refuse what would be not only the glory of his heart, but the pride of the whole parish.

"I accept your munificent offer most gratefully," he said, warmly; "it is indeed unexpected. It is very good of you."

"It is an honor to contribute towards a church, Mr. Manley."

"I think so, but I do not find my views universal, Mrs. Vincent."

"Thank you so very much for letting me give the peal."

He smiled.

"The thanks should come from me and my people, I think."

"Oh, but I was so afraid you would have made objections, and not accepted it until I felt utterly crushed by my presumption in offering it, which would have entirely destroyed my pleasure in making the gift."

"That would have been very wrong on my part, Mrs. Vincent. I do not think I could be guilty of such ingratitude; for such conduct would in reality proceed from ingratitude, though veiled by the

name of pride. Far better, I think, to refuse a gift at once than receive it so."

And then, in a few gracious words, Mrs. Vincent congratulated Mr. Manley on his engagement, which, she said, she had quite foreseen when they were at Seafort that day; and that she would be very pleased if he could spare the time to call with her now on Miss Ethel, in order that she might invite her and her sister to visit them at Templemore, and she hoped the Vicar would accompany them.

Now, though Mrs. Vincent thought Ethel Hatton a nice enough girl, she certainly would not have made this proposal except out of compliment to Mr. Manley, for whom she had already conceived a great liking and respect.

He replied that he would *make* time; and if she did not object to wait one moment on their road to Admiral Hatton's, while he called at Mr. Rowen's, he should then be enabled to be free for another hour.

"Is every hour of your day occupied, Mr. Manley?"

"Nearly every hour."

"That is rather hard."

"I like it," he replied, and changed the subject.

Mr. Rowen came to the door himself, and Mrs. Vincent begged to be introduced, and smiled so brightly at him that even the melancholy curate succumbed to her influence, and asked if he should show her the church—an offer he had never made to any one since he had been in Newforth.

"Thank you *so* much," said Mrs. Vincent; "and I should have been *delighted*, but Mr. Manley has been so kind as to show it to me already."

Mr. Rowen looked uneasy.

"That's right, Rowen," said the Vicar, cheerfully. "I am glad you don't mind showing the church; next time you shall do so instead of me."

This speech restored the curate's equanimity; for he stood a little in awe of Mr. Manley.

The Hatton girls were both at home. Mrs. Vincent made known her request.

"And you must come," she continued, "while this fine weather lasts. I think we shall find quite enough to interest you in the grounds and the town for two or three days."

"We shall be delighted to come," said Miss Hatton; "and it is extremely kind of you to ask us."

"Shall I ask Mr. Campbell to meet you?"

"No," answered the girl, with decision; "I would rather not. I haven't seen him since that day at Seafort, when he behaved so badly."

For Mr. Campbell had thought it advisable to remain away for a little while, knowing also that Captain Worsley was safely out of the way at Plymouth.

Mrs. Vincent then took her leave. The Vicar said he would take her to the hotel.

"Indeed you shall not," she exclaimed, with energy. "Sooner

than that," she added, with a smile, "I would call on Mr. Rowen, and ask him to escort me."

The girls laughed.

"You worked Mr. Rowen up to making a most marvellous effort this morning, Mrs. Vincent," said the Vicar, smiling; "but I think that even you would not be able to persuade him to go to your hotel and face your husband. As you will not allow me to accompany you, I must submit."

"How nice she is!" said Mrs. Hatton, after Mrs. Vincent left.

"She is," replied the Vicar. "She is very pretty, but it is her expression that I admire so much; for I think much more of expression than feature. It is my theory that when any one is past his first youth, he makes his own face; or, if a woman, that she does."

"How so?" asked Ethel.

"The ideas of the mind communicate themselves to the facial lineaments. This is more especially the case with regard to the mouth. An habitually discontented, querulous mind causes the corners of the mouth to draw down; a smiling, happy disposition, has the reverse effect. A determined person closes his mouth in such a manner that in time his mouth alters; and so on—to say nothing of the eyes and other features, to all of which expression is distinctly communicable."

"I never thought of that," said Ethel.

"Show me a man's face, and I shall be surprised if I cannot tell you what manner of man he is," said the Vicar.

"We are not all so clever as you," said Miss Hatton, with a laugh. "But, talking of ability, what an extraordinary thing it is that Mr. Rowen cannot preach better after being ordained so long; and he does not want for sense either."

"I would rather not hear Mr. Rowen criticised," said the Vicar; "his good work speaks for him more than his sermons."

"But you must allow he is frightfully obscure; and when he is most obscure, he turns to the congregation and says, 'You all know what I mean.' Mr. Leslie says he often feels inclined to get up and say, 'I haven't the faintest notion what you mean, nor has any one else.'"

"Don't, Gertrude," said Ethel.

"I'll go now," returned Miss Hatton, "and then I can't be scolded. Although it would be in the nature of a new experience to hear *you* scold any one, Mr. Manley."

"If I don't actually scold, I can be very stern when I like," said the Vicar; adding, as Miss Hatton went away, "Don't you think so, Ethel?"

She laughed.

"Well, Phil, if I were you, I wouldn't propound that theory about expression quite so openly."

"And why not?"

"People *might* say that conceit originated it."

"Conceit?" he repeated.

"You see when any one—not you, of course—but when any one

has a beautiful expression himself— What are you shaking your head at me for? I didn't say *you* had."

He stopped her with a kiss.

"I am not half stern enough with you, I see. What did you promise me?"

"I have kept my word, Phil; I have really. But I wish it was Christmas, and then I could tell you what I think of you. Couldn't we," looking up into his face, "couldn't we make it Christmas-day, just for once?"

"Ethel, my darling," he said, seriously, "I wish you knew me as I know myself. Who knows but when Christmas-day comes—and we shall then be married I hope—you will then have a very different tale to tell me."

"It is impossible, Phil," she replied, earnestly; "*nothing* could destroy my faith in you."

"Your faith may, perhaps, be tested before long," he said, gravely.

"My faith will stand any test. I not only love you, but I believe in you with all my heart; you know I do, Phil."

He took her in his arms, and bade her farewell with something of solemnity; he lingered over the parting, and seemed as if he could not bear to let her go.

"I love you too much, Ethel," he said; "I know I love you too much."

It was well that they could not foresee that this was their last unclouded meeting for many a long day.

"God bless you, my darling!" he said as he went out; "and I pray you may retain your trust in me."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STRANGE WOMAN.

ARRANGEMENTS for commencing the spire at once were made. Before a few weeks had elapsed the estimates had been sent in, and some of the scaffolding erected.

The Vicar watched the work with the greatest interest, and was constantly at the church; but, in spite of this interest, he was looking very troubled; he seemed to carry about some care with him.

About this time a very pretty woman was occasionally seen in Newforth. She was an exceedingly pretty young woman, with a clever face, and dark hair and eyes. Her dress was that of a working woman; she wore a plainly-made gown of black material, a quiet straw bonnet, and a cloak almost Quakerish in its cut. She usually came to Newforth in the early morning, made her purchases at the market, and disappeared.

Out of idle curiosity, one day, young Mr. Allen thought he would trace her. He followed her to Fisherman's Cove, and saw her enter the house of Mrs. Stevens.

"Such a lark!" he said to his sister. "There is some one here who beats all you girls hollow—except Ethel, of course."

"Who is she?" asked Miss Allen.

Her brother detailed his adventure.

"I wonder you took the trouble to follow a common woman about," said Miss Allen, contemptuously; "it was very wrong of you."

"It is my belief she is not a common woman," he replied. "She wore no gloves, but her hands were white and delicate. I saw she had on a wedding-ring."

Miss Allen smiled rather disagreeably.

"You really ought to have some occupation found for you, Edward; you idle away all your time, and will soon get into mischief. Pray don't see any more of the woman."

But young Mr. Allen's interest had been greatly excited by the stranger's face. He watched at the window the next market-day until she appeared; then, taking up his hat, he followed her at a respectful distance.

She bought some fruit, some gravy beef, and a few other articles; then, leaving the market, entered a chemist's shop, and remained there some time.

Still Mr. Allen lingered, he scarcely knew why.

She placed her purchases in a large basket she carried on her arm, and commenced her walk home along the straight, dusty high-road. It was very hot—very hot, indeed; the sun was scorching, the dust flying in showers. Her black dress looked, at length, as if it had been powdered.

Young Mr. Allen, sauntering lazily along in his cool suit of light gray, a large umbrella held over his head, became conscious that he did not like to see this woman toiling along in front of him, he must offer to help her. Many and many a poor, tired old woman had passed him already, but no idea of assisting them had entered his mind. He quickened his pace and overtook her.

"You look tired," he said, kindly; "let me carry your basket for you."

She was on the point of refusing proudly, and then it seemed to occur to her that a working woman might well accept such assistance. "You are very kind," she replied, and gave it to him.

He placed it gallantly on his arm. It was very heavy, and made him feel woefully warm.

A young lady he knew met him at this moment. He raised his hat, feeling inclined to throw the basket into the road.

"You had better give it back to me," said the stranger; "it is not pleasant for a young man like you to be met by your friends carrying a basket, and in company with a woman of my class."

But these words only confirmed Mr. Allen in his opinion that she was a lady. "No working woman has such a voice and manner," he said to himself, and then something in her tone seemed familiar to him, and he thought he must have met her before, perhaps differently dressed and under other circumstances.

"I like to carry your basket," he said, stoutly. "Where do you live?"

She hesitated a moment, then answered, quietly, "I am lodging at Fisherman's Cove with my husband. My husband is an invalid."

The heat was very great, the two-mile walk seemed greatly to fatigue her. The approach to Fisherman's Cove from the road was by a very narrow lane leading to the cliffs above the beach. A stile separated the lane from the road.

Here she stopped, saying, "I thank you very much;" and would have taken the basket from his hands. But he did not wish to go.

"Let me carry it down to the beach for you," he said.

"No, thank you, sir."

"I see a cow coming up the lane; it may run at you. Let me see you safely past her, at all events," urged the young man.

The woman shuddered.

"I am *very* much afraid of cows," she said; "I have lived in London so much." And then she checked herself, as if she had said too much.

The lane was winding, trees branched overhead. On one side were rocky mounds; on the other, fields.

"How pretty it is," she exclaimed, "and how glad I am to be in the shade once more."

Her flushed cheeks made her eyes shine brilliantly. Mr. Allen decided that his morning's work had not been thrown away.

"The sea looks jolly, doesn't it?" he said. "I shall go for a row when I get back. Perhaps I could get one of the fishermen at the Cove to take me round."

"I dare say you could, sir," she replied, in somewhat measured tones; "it will save you a long, hot walk."

They were now at the edge of the cliffs; the path began to slope and wind down the face of them.

"You must not accompany me farther," she said, with decision. "I should prefer going on to the beach alone. I thank you very much."

"There might be another cow," he said, knowing that the path was far too steep for such an animal to walk on, and that the cow they had already passed had been the most quiet of her kind.

"I prefer to go alone," she answered, shortly.

He raised his hat, saying, "Good-morning."

She turned to him.

"You should not take off your hat to a working woman; it is not customary. You will oblige me very much by not doing so should you meet me again; indeed, I would rather that you did not recognize me at all."

"But why?" he asked. "I thought it was allowable—to a working woman," he added, with emphasis.

"Because—" she hesitated, "you are too courteous; it is not customary in our class."

"A working woman!" he repeated, "she is no more a working woman than I am."

He threw himself on the short grass at the edge of the cliff, and watched her until she reached the beach.

The sea was so brilliant with sunlight that he could scarcely rest his eyes on it. On the beach he saw some of the boats drawn up; the fishermen in their bright jerseys and caps were cutting up dog-fish for bait. A man in a white linen coat and corduroy trousers was lying on the beach watching them. Mr. Allen could not see his face; he wore a shady felt hat, well pulled over his brows; but the light glanced in such a way as to make the young man think he wore spectacles. The woman deposited her basket within the most sheltered of the cottages, Mrs. Stevens's, and then went on to the beach. She walked up to the man lying down, and spoke to him, turning her back towards the cliffs. A few moments afterwards Mr. Allen saw some one walking quickly along the beach who had come from Newforth. He recognized the Vicar. The latter nodded a greeting to the fishermen at work, and spoke to the man and the woman. The man rose, all three went to Mrs. Stevens's house, and, going in, shut the door. Mr. Allen got up and stretched himself lazily. Why or wherefore he did not know, but he resolved to walk home.

"They might not want me hanging about here," he said, though he could give no reason for such a speech; "but oh, how glad I should have been of a boat!"

He walked home slowly, grumbling at the heat and dust. On his arrival, he detailed the whole account to his mother, who, disagreeable woman as she was, thought her son could do no wrong.

"What a long story about nothing!" said his sister. "You could have told it in one minute. You met a pretty workman's wife, and were soft enough to be imposed on by her; and the Vicar visited them, as he does every one all over the place."

Young Allen began to whistle a tune.

"Don't be so rude to your brother, Mary," said Mrs. Allen. "I am interested in all he tells me."

"You always did believe your goose was a swan," returned her daughter, provokingly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"THAT PRETTY WOMAN."

THE Misses Hatton paid their visit to Templemore, but the Vicar did not accompany them. He was extremely sorry, he said, but he could not possibly leave Newforth, even for a day. So Ethel departed, somewhat vexed.

On her return he at once sought her, only to be received with marked coolness. Now, even from those he loved best, the Vicar was not a man to put up with any undeserved slight; he showed his sense of displeasure by staying away for an entire week.

But it was not alone on account of Ethel's coldness that he remained away. He was undergoing great anxiety, apart from his

parish work, and, in addition, business of a most pressing nature called for a great amount of his time.

And now arose, no one knew why or wherefore, vague rumors concerning Mr. Manley—that he was too often at Fisherman's Cove; that he had been seen walking with some woman in the evening; that, when apparently proceeding in haste to some destination, it was on business entirely unconnected with his parish work, and better left alone.

Mr. Allen had often turned his steps in the direction of the Cove, but had met with no reward for his trouble. Going along the high-road one evening, when it was dusk, he had been overtaken by the Vicar, who passed without recognizing him. Mr. Allen saw that he took the lane leading to the Cove, and when Mr. Allen had gained the cliffs, and remained there some hour and a half, until it was quite dark, he saw Mr. Manley leave Mrs. Stevens's cottage. The light from within revealed that the stranger-lodger was with him, and that the Vicar was talking earnestly to her at the door.

A story never loses in repeating. Vague hints began to reach Ethel. On her part she was seriously concerned at Mr. Manley's prolonged absence; for although she had seen him in church, he had made no attempt to speak to her. Feeling that she had been in fault, she wrote and asked him to come and see her. He complied with her request within an hour. To him, also, it had been a great trouble not to see her; but, alas! within that hour another visitor had been before him.

"The Vicar has been to the Cove again, mother," Mr. Allen had said a short time previously.

"And why should he not; and why should you be a spy on the Vicar?" his sister had retorted, sharply.

"And why shouldn't your brother go there as well as the Vicar, without his being a spy?" returned Mrs. Allen, sharply.

"Come," said that young man, good-temperedly, "we needn't quarrel over it. I am the last one to be a spy. I happened to be passing, and I saw him—that's all. Don't make such a row about it."

"People are beginning to say all kinds of things," replied his mother. "Some one ought to tell that unfortunate Ethel. It is quite some one's duty."

"Take my advice, and don't *you* be that some one," said her son; "you will only put your foot into it. And, after all, what do we know that is any harm?"

"It isn't what we know; it's what we hear."

"That is ridiculous," said Mary Allen, with warmth. "People ought never to believe what they hear."

"There is no smoke without fire," returned Mrs. Allen. "I shall put on my bonnet at once, and go round to the Hattons."

"You had much better not," said her son, who deeply regretted having given any information.

But Mrs. Allen was not to be persuaded; she put on her bonnet and went out. On passing the church she went round to look at the

building going on. There stood the Vicar, talking to the foreman. He raised his hat gravely, but did not come forward to speak. Now, this was a mark of attention which Mrs. Allen thought due to her; she felt annoyed, and declared to herself that, as he did not show her any particular courtesy, he could not expect her to treat him with much consideration.

Admiral and Mrs. Hatton and the girls were all at home, but even Mrs. Allen did not think it advisable to bring forward her subject in Admiral Hatton's presence.

"It is very warm this afternoon," she said, fanning herself. "I should so like to see your roses, and sit under the shade of your nice trees. Won't you show me your garden, Miss Ethel?"

"With pleasure," returned that young lady, falling at once into the trap.

"I can't take any one else out in the heat; I can't, indeed," said Mrs. Allen, as Mrs. Hatton got up to accompany her. "I will be with you in a few minutes."

She walked across the lawn with Ethel.

"And what is this I hear about the Vicar?" she asked, abruptly.

Ethel colored, thinking she alluded to his absence of the past week, and vexed to think the fact must in some way have been made known to the town.

"I thought I would come to you first of all, my dear," continued Mrs. Allen, "because I am the *last* person ever to repeat scandal or say anything ill-natured; and, of course, *you* must know all about it."

"About what?" asked Ethel, distantly.

"About these visits to Fisherman's Cove."

"What visits? I do not understand you."

"Oh," returned Mrs. Allen, with marked emphasis; "then it is worse than I thought. I *made sure* he would have told *you*."

"Told me *what*, Mrs. Allen," said Ethel, indignantly. "What is there to tell? Of course, I have always known that Mr. Manley visited at Fisherman's Cove."

"Ah, my dear," said Mrs. Allen, in a voice of commiseration, "it isn't just ordinary visiting. A very pretty woman lives there, and my son has seen—yes, actually *seen*—the Vicar talking to her at night, with his own eyes."

"How could he see with any other person's eyes?" asked Miss Hatton, sharply, who had joined them unobserved.

"What nonsense you are talking, Mrs. Allen; I don't believe a word of it."

"You are very polite," replied Mrs. Allen. "I must say, *very* polite."

"I can't help it," returned Miss Hatton, "but I do hate scandal, and I am quite sure that any scandal against the Vicar would be gross falsehood. Will you tell me, in black and white, what you mean?"

"No," said Mrs. Allen, now very angry. "No, I won't; and if your sister doesn't know, all I can say is, I am very sorry for her, poor thing. I told her, *because I considered it my duty*. Good-afternoon!"

"Whenever any one is spiteful, it is always because of one's duty," said Miss Hatton, warmly. "What are you looking like that about, Ethel? You can't be such a fool as to *believe* it."

"I don't believe it," said Ethel, in a low voice, "but I wish people wouldn't talk; and oh, how I wish Phil would come."

She had dressed herself very becomingly for his reception; and, even as she spoke, his head appeared in the distance.

"I will leave you to yourselves," said her sister; "but I advise you to be careful what you say, Ethel. From what I know of Mr. Manley—for Miss Hatton never called him by his Christian name—"I am sure he is not the man to put up with any nonsense."

The Vicar came forward with outstretched hands.

"Ethel, my darling, are you glad to see me?" he asked, gently.

"Yes," she answered, quietly, but without drawing nearer to him; "I am very glad indeed, Phil. I did not think you would have stayed away so long. Why did you?"

"Can you tell me truthfully that you received me quite as you should have done on the occasion of my last visit? I am not finding fault, my darling," he said, gravely, "but I cannot let you think I have been indifferent to you."

"No, Phil," she answered, in a low tone, "I did not receive you properly, and I am very sorry. But I did think you might have gone to Templemore with us."

"I told you at the time that it was quite impossible for me to leave Newforth for a single day."

He had placed her hand in his arm, and was standing beneath the trees.

"But what made it impossible? That is what you did not tell me."

"That is what I *cannot* tell you, Ethel; you must not expect either now, or when we are married, to be told *everything*. A number of people confide in a clergyman who certainly would not confide in him if he were to repeat even the substance of their communications to his wife."

Mrs. Allen's insinuations returned to Ethel's mind; she withdrew her hand from the Vicar's arm.

"Phil," she exclaimed, suddenly, "do you know people are talking about you."

"About me!" he repeated; "and what do they say?"

"I don't know what they say, but they make very unpleasant hints."

"Of what nature?"

She repeated Mrs. Allen's words, as far as she remembered them; but, instead of the indignant denial she had expected, the Vicar's face wore a look of the most serious concern, and for some moments he did not speak.

"I am extremely sorry to hear that any such reports are being spread," he said, at length, very gravely; "extremely sorry."

"But they are not true, Phil, are they?" said Ethel, appealingly.

"*What!*" he exclaimed, in amazement, "do *you* believe in any-

thing of that nature you may have heard against me—you, Ethel?" and he set his face sternly.

"Please don't be angry, Phil," she returned, humbly; "I *don't* believe it. I only wanted you to say that you didn't go to the Cove so much to see that pretty woman."

"But I *do* go there," he returned, with decision, "although I do not see why my actions should be the subject of public remark. I go to see the woman of whom you speak, whose husband is ill."

"Oh," said Ethel, greatly relieved, "then you go to see him because he is ill."

"I wish you to understand, Ethel, in the clearest, though in the kindest, manner," said the Vicar, speaking very gently, "that I do not admit even *your* right to question my actions where my parishioners are concerned. These matters are between them and me alone. But, as I do not wish you to understand what is false, even though it be implied falsehood, I will tell you that I go to see them *both*; they are both in need of me."

She turned away from him.

"Ethel," he said, gravely, "if you knew what trouble I am in, you would not behave thus."

She turned to him at once, saying, gently, "I am very sorry, dear Phil; I did not know you were in trouble. Tell me what it is."

"That is just what I cannot tell you, my darling; it would not be right that I should at present. Meantime you will do me a great service by silencing these reports, if you possibly can. I am more grieved than I can say that they should have got wind."

She looked up at him, prepared to tell him she would do her very utmost, when a sudden idea flashed across her mind, and she spoke impulsively, "Is the trouble about *that pretty woman*, Phil?"

He turned round, and walked out of the garden without another word.

CHAPTER XIX.

DISTRUST.

MATTERS in Newforth parish were going badly. It was not that there was any lack of zeal in work, any lack of funds, any abatement of interest in the building of the spire, but that an ever-growing scandal concerning the Vicar was spreading. It had even penetrated to the poorer classes of Newforth, to the various districts; and when the British workman gets hold of any one's reputation, good-bye to it.

The wildest reports prevailed—originating no one knew how or whence—that the Vicar had been seen at the dead of night in the country lanes with the strange woman; that in the dusk, under the shelter of the cliffs, he had kissed her over and over again; that his visits to her husband were a mere pretext, together with suppositions still more wild and improbable.

What had any one seen? No reliable witness had seen anything; but, of course, it must be true, or other people could not be talking. Certainly Mr. Manley's dog had been recognized outside Mrs. Stevens's cottage on various occasions, but otherwise no one could say a word positively. Still there were talkings and whisperings and shaking of heads, and the Vicar's influence was perceptibly weaker. He himself was quite unconscious of what was said, with the exception of Ethel's communication to him. That any talk should have arisen was a great anxiety to him, for reasons totally unconnected with himself, and added vastly to the actual trouble itself. His cheeks were becoming a little hollow; his voice more touching, and certainly a little melancholy, the ring of pathos was very perceptible.

Ethel he had not seen since he had parted from her in the garden. In truth, he had been most deeply hurt and surprised. Still, within an hour, he sent her a note—a very short note. It said:

“If I failed in courtesy towards you, Ethel, in leaving you to-day without wishing you good-bye, I now offer you an apology.
“T. M.”

This, for a first love-letter, cannot be called ardent; but the Vicar had not the smallest intention of making it ardent. He felt terribly disappointed, and much grieved at the jealousy she had displayed. He had been quite right in telling her she was of a jealous disposition, when they were first engaged. She was very jealous; although she had done her utmost to keep her jealousy under control, or to conceal it, she had yet felt jealous of every woman he had spoken to, of every word of praise bestowed by him; at times she was even jealous of his cook! And now that he did not come and see her—for during the first few days the Vicar had resolved not to do so—and these reports were gathering and gaining ground, she felt intensely wretched.

For himself he suffered much. He was a man of very strong feeling, and in every relationship of life his feelings, when touched, were touched deeply.

He had loved his mother with an affection shown by few sons; he had been the most warm-hearted of friends, the staunchest of partisans. He could not be lukewarm. He loved his congregation with a genuine self-forgetting regard; and now that he had given his heart to Ethel, he could not affect indifference, or play fast and loose with her, after the fashion of many modern lovers.

He had intended, on her return from Témplemore, to make her aware that he was in trouble, and ask her forbearance in not seeking to become acquainted with the nature of that trouble; but her doubts had so disturbed and distressed him that he no longer felt inclined to seek her. He loved her as much—that feeling was beyond his control—but he was disappointed in her. Believing that it would be best for them both that they should not meet quite yet, he remained away.

By this time Mr. Yorke had been made aware that something was

wrong. He was greatly troubled. He was now a man of considerable influence in Newforth, partly owing to his means and good family, partly to his own dignified bearing, and to his friendship with the Vincents and Mr. Manley. He had a mortal horror of morning visits, but, notwithstanding, he spent a considerable portion of his afternoons now in calling with his wife on every one he knew in the place. Of course, in every house the Vicar was at present the prominent subject of conversation; and Yorke entering into it as a matter of course, used his very utmost endeavors to laugh away any unpleasant hint that might arise, and would sometimes, in a casual way, acquaint people that he had known Mr. Manley intimately as a boy and young man, and considered that they were most fortunate in having him in their parish, as he was—he could speak from personal knowledge—one of the best men who ever lived. Whether to acquaint the Vicar with what was going on against him he did not know. He decided at length that he would not; it would only add to his trouble, and do no good.

It was now the end of August, and although, in the first instance, Mr. Manley had expressed a wish to be married at the end of September, still no preparations were made; by mutual consent, latterly, the subject had been avoided. But it had already been agreed that the wedding was to be as quiet as possible. There were to be neither guests nor carriages; neither was there to be any breakfast. The bride and bridegroom were to be married early, and go away from the church doors on the short honeymoon of a fortnight, which was all the time the Vicar thought he could spare. She would, of course, be married in a travelling dress, and he had requested that her trousseau should not be unnecessarily large, knowing as he did full well that any great outlay would certainly hamper Admiral Hatton.

While matters stood thus, Mr. Leslie met the Vicar one day in a road leading out of Newforth. Now the church-warden had long ago woke up to the idea that there were duties, and very serious duties, attached to his office. He conceived that it was now one of them to interrogate Mr. Manley as to the reports that had arisen. Properly speaking, he knew this unpleasant duty should have belonged to Admiral Hatton, as the people's warden; but as yet the scandal had barely reached the Admiral.

Owing to the engagement with his daughter, people were chary of communicating the Vicar's supposed delinquencies to him; and also the Admiral was known to have a very hot temper, and to be quite incapable of keeping a secret. He would as likely as not have rushed off to the Vicar, and in whatever place or company he had found him, demanded *what he meant by it*; and would probably publish his answer to every one he met, until his anger had cooled down, and he had time to act reasonably.

But it was not without very great reluctance that Mr. Leslie approached the subject. Warm as was his regard for his Vicar, he was quite conscious that he was a man with whom even his greatest friend would not feel justified in taking a liberty. In this case he

knew that one of the church-wardens must speak, and of the two he preferred it should be himself.

He did not personally believe in one word of the truth of the reports; he had the most unbounded faith in his Vicar, in addition to his great liking for him. It was with a hesitation quite foreign to his nature that he opened the subject.

Mr. Manley was returning from visiting a sick man in an outlying district; the day was very warm and he looked tired. He was carrying some books which, on a former visit, he had lent the man.

"Let me take them from you," said Mr. Leslie; "I have nothing to carry."

"We will divide them," said the Vicar, cheerfully; "they are rather heavy on so warm a day. Thank you."

Feeling that any delay would only increase the difficulty, Mr. Leslie plunged at once into his subject.

"Mr. Manley," he said, abruptly, "there are a pack of fools here who are ill-natured enough to spread reports to your disadvantage. It is with the very greatest dislike that I tell you this, and I don't believe a syllable of it myself; but I thought you ought to be told, in order that you might give me your authority for at once contradicting them, which I shall have the greatest pleasure in doing."

Once more an expression of deep concern overspread the Vicar's thoughtful face.

"Are these reports general, and extensively circulated?" he asked, gravely.

"Unfortunately they are."

"Will you kindly tell me what is said?"

Mr. Leslie did so, blending his remarks with many indignant comments, and adding, "I feel sure that you will tell me the rights of it, and we will soon put an end to this."

"This is all I can tell you," said the Vicar. "A man and woman are lodging at Fisherman's Cove. He is ill; they are both in serious trouble, and in need of me and my services. This you can mention openly. As to some of the reports you have stated, I need scarcely assure you that they are entirely false. But I tell you in confidence—not as to a lawyer, but as to a friend, a hearty, sincere friend—that there will be serious mischief done if these reports are not silenced. Personally, I am not to blame."

"That I am quite sure of," said Mr. Leslie, warmly; "I never thought you were. The nuisance of it is that when people once begin to talk, it is such a very difficult matter to stop them. I suppose I may contradict that you ever met this woman in the dead of night."

"Not in the dead of night; but I have met her at ten o'clock at night. I candidly allow—still in confidence—that I did not wish our meeting to be made public. Circumstances prevented my going to her and her husband that evening, and to save time she came to meet me, on one occasion. I did not know we were watched."

"If you met every woman in the parish in turn, night after night,

I should think it no harm, and know there was a reason for it. Unfortunately other people won't believe that."

The Vicar smiled.

"I hope no such experience is likely to befall me; I should very much object to meet every woman in the parish, or any woman in the parish. It has been, alas! a most painful necessity."

"Am I to say so?"

"No," said the Vicar, with decision; "for the present, I would rather have as little said as possible. One of these days I shall be able to explain it to you. At present I must be more careful than I have been. Though openly visiting every one as I have ever done—many of them day after day in cases of illness—it is a mystery to me how reports as of something unusual should have got about."

"It is always the case that when you don't want a thing to happen it does happen," said Mr. Leslie.

"Is Admiral Hatton aware of this?"

"I do not think he is."

"Is Ethel?"

"I cannot say. I told my wife to be sure and not say anything; but I must honestly tell you there is a great deal said."

The Vicar's great love arose in his heart; he longed to be with Ethel.

"I thank you, Leslie," he said. "I will say good-bye now; I am going at once to the Hattons."

"I will leave the books for you at the vicarage," returned Mr. Leslie; "it will be on my road, and out of yours."

"You are very kind."

The Vicar walked on with a quick step, his mind fuller of Ethel and the cause for jealousy she might be feeling than of his own anxiety, and the injury the reports might cause him.

In the lane he met her. She was dressed all in white; her face and figure looked very beautiful as she stood beneath the elm-trees. She carried some geraniums in her hand.

"Ethel, my darling," he said, hastening towards her, "I am very glad to see you. I want to have a long talk with you. We must not be estranged from one another, you know. If it has been my fault I am willing to make most ample amends."

But in reply to this speech, which was most earnestly delivered, Ethel only gave a light laugh.

"Ethel," he said, gravely, "I have told you that I wish to speak to you. Where can we speak quietly?"

"If I had known you were coming to-day, Phil," she replied, carelessly, "I would have stayed at home; but, as you never do come now, I have accepted an invitation to Mrs. Allen's."

"Mrs. Allen's!" said the Vicar. "I am surprised that you should go there, after what she has said about me, which you repeated to me yourself."

"It is a garden-party," returned Ethel, "and I was dull."

"Is not your sister going?"

She colored as she replied "No,"

"You can spare me a little time before you go, I suppose?"

"I really don't think I can, Phil; I shall be late as it is."

"When can you see me?"

"I really don't know. Good-bye, Phil."

She walked on; he raised his hat, and stood still in his dismay and vexation.

Miss Hatton came out at the garden-gate and held out her hand, shaking the Vicar's warmly.

"You are not going to the garden-party?" he said.

"No," answered Miss Hatton, energetically. "I should not *think* of it after what that woman said here the other day. I told Ethel she had no right to go. I can't think what has come over her lately; she isn't like herself."

In truth, overpowering jealousy had come over her, completely warping her reason and judgment. She had heard all her more polite neighbors had to say, and in visiting her district had heard far more. The working classes being given to calling a spade not only a spade, but far more than a spade, had expressed their opinion in no measured terms, and Ethel, from want of knowledge, had been unable to contradict them. Their words added fuel to the flame, and she lived in wretchedness and anger. The Vicar's character was torn to shreds among them—all his kindness, his goodness, his earnestness, served only to cause such speeches as these: "Lor', miss, and if he isn't just what he should be, what does it matter? A kind gentleman like he, who is generous with his money."

"I must see Ethel," said the Vicar to Miss Hatton; "it is incredible that she should believe the worst of me. There are certain things it is my duty to tell her. I should have done so long ago, could I have foreseen any of this most unfortunate talk."

"Mr. Manley," said Miss Hatton, earnestly, "if I were in Ethel's place I should not require a word of explanation. You are a good man, I know, and that ought to be enough."

"Thank you, Gertrude," said Mr. Manley; "I wish Ethel had your trust. Will you tell her from me that I expect her to appoint an interview with me?"

"Yes; and perhaps," she continued, with some hesitation—"perhaps it might be as well for you not to go to the Cove just yet."

"I *must* go there," he replied, gravely.

CHAPTER XX.

TROUBLE.

THE Vicar was greatly distressed—distressed above measure. Any other trial he thought he would have borne better, but this scandal affected his usefulness, affected his work, and he was sure would injure the cause of religion, by making people believe he was a hypocrite.

His voice became stern; when not actively engaged in the service, he would lean against a column, with his head thrown slightly back, his white hand on his chin, his firm mouth set determinedly, an expression of stern endurance on his face. Sometimes he would almost turn his back on the congregation, and lean his head on his hand. He was conscious that, instead of the glances of affectionate interest bestowed on him, the looks savored now more of curiosity than regard; but he beheld as though he saw not. He did his duties as before, though his visiting among the poor had become a great trial. If he could have openly declared himself blameless, and stated all the circumstances, he would have done so; he knew that he was compelled to hold his peace.

"Could I have foreseen this, *nothing* would have prevailed on me to give my word," he said to himself, "on account of the harm that is being brought on all clergymen in my name; but it is now useless to regret."

Many a time in the poorer streets did he hear insinuations thrown out as he passed, but he held his head a little higher, and took no heed.

Ethel he had not seen, she went away suddenly for a week's visit to some friends. He determined that she should see him on her return, whether willingly or not.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ENGAGEMENT BROKEN.

THE Vicar and Mr. Yorke were now often seen in earnest consultation.

"You have made a great mistake, Phil, I am afraid, out of sheer kindness of heart," said Mr. Yorke, who, since his friend had been in trouble, never addressed him otherwise than as "Phil," lingering over the name as though to give him a proof of his sincere friendship; for Mr. Yorke was most warmly attached to Mr. Manley.

"I am afraid I have," returned the Vicar, "but it is now too late to turn back."

"It is the ultimate consequences I am thinking of," said Yorke.

"You mean that I might be compelled to resign my living; that would indeed be a great trouble."

But there were even worse consequences in Mr. Yorke's mind than that.

"Is it even yet too late to state the truth?" he asked.

"It is too late; I cannot do it, Yorke." And thoughts passed through the Vicar's mind, as certain possibilities arose before him, which made him look very sad.

Of late he had lost his appearance of youth; he looked his full age. He was still strong and vigorous as ever; his face was even finer in its expression of determination, but there was care in his eyes.

Ethel returned late one evening. While she had been away her thoughts had rested almost entirely on Mr. Manley, and she saw she had been greatly to blame. At least she could hear what he had to say. She wrote him a note appointing a meeting out of doors the next day, at a place some little distance down the high-road. He replied, by her messenger, that he would not fail to be there.

On this evening Admiral Hatton was dining out. It was a gentleman's dinner-party; some fourteen were present.

After dinner the conversation turned on the unfortunate Vicar, and the guests, warmed with their wine, and forgetting the position of his daughter, retailed to the Admiral all the various reports which had been circulating for so long.

The old gentleman started up in a fury. "I'll not believe it; I can't believe it of Manley. I have always found him a good man and a gentleman. Where shall I find him, I wonder? I will go to him this minute."

"Oh," said Mr. Campbell, who was of the party, "he is probably to be found at Fisherman's Cove."

"Hold your tongue, sir," roared the Admiral; "what do you mean by that?"

"No, sir," said Mr. Campbell, firmly (who was perfectly sober and collected), "I will *not* hold my tongue. I distinctly saw him go down the road towards the Cove half an hour ago. If it wasn't him it must have been his ghost."

"I will go to him," said the Admiral, and, turning to his host, continued, "you must excuse me, Smith."

"With pleasure," returned Mr. Smith, who, under the circumstances, was extremely glad to see the Admiral's back.

"We can talk in peace now," he said.

"Won't he give the parson a wiggling, that's all!" said Mr. Campbell, "and serve him jolly well right! This comes of all your profession of goodness!"

"I don't know what to think," said Mr. Smith. "I could have sworn the Vicar was as good a man as ever breathed."

"I believe he is now," said young Mr. Allen; "I dare say it's more than half lies."

"It is a great pity he should be so much at the Cove," said Mr. Smith.

Meantime the Admiral's indignation was lending him wings. He sped along the high-road in a manner totally unprecedented for him, arriving at the entrance to the Cove breathless. He saw a light in Mrs. Stevens's cottage as he made his way cautiously down the cliff; the other houses were dark, shut up for the night.

It was now ten o'clock, and a most lovely evening. There was no moon, but the stars were shining over the sea. He heard the dip of oars, and thought he could discern the hull of a large fishing-boat making her way slowly towards the Cove, but he was not quite sure.

He looked about for the door of Mrs. Stevens's cottage, quite determined to make his way in and ask for the Vicar. But at first he could not find it. He found himself beneath an open window, and

caught the tones of Mr. Manley's deep voice. There were shutters of lattice-work across the window, which shut from the outside; he cautiously opened one a little way and looked in, excusing himself on the ground that it was a work of necessity. And this is what he saw. A poorly-furnished sitting-room, its sole occupants the Vicar and a very pretty woman in humble attire, and the pretty woman was in the Vicar's arms.

"God bless you, my dearest Mary!" he heard, in the clergyman's well-known tones, his voice ringing with the deepest feeling; "good-bye, dear, and may God be with you," and then he kissed her three or four times.

The Admiral closed the window-shutter with a bang, although the noise was unobserved by those within.

"The scoundrel!" he exclaimed, "the vile, hypocritical scoundrel! the whole parish shall hear of this. He shall not stay in Newforth another week."

He would have made his way into the cottage there and then had he not caught sight of the Vicar's active form ascending the cliffs with a quick step. But it was in vain that he endeavored to overtake him. The Admiral's previous exertions had somewhat exhausted him, and by the time he had gained the summit Mr. Manley was completely out of sight.

Admiral Hatton paused to rest for a few minutes. As he waited he again heard the dip of oars, and thought he saw the large boat leave the shore.

He arrived at home furious. "If it wasn't so late I would go to the vicarage at once," he said.

"Much better sleep over it, father," said Miss Hatton, who had remained up, and had heard the narrative with some concern. "Perhaps the Vicar will be able to explain it satisfactorily."

"A scoundrel would not mind being a liar," retorted the Admiral.

"That Mr. Manley *couldn't* be," said Miss Hatton, with much warmth.

"Go to bed," returned her father, "and don't talk about what you don't understand." At a quarter to eight o'clock the next morning, just before the service, the Vicar received a note, written in great haste evidently, with scrawls and blotches on its pages. It ran thus:

"MR. MANLEY,—I demand an explanation of your conduct last night, on my daughter's account, and also on account of the parishioners of Newforth.
H. T. HATTON."

The bell was even then ringing for service; the Vicar put the letter in his pocket and crossed over to the church. It was his custom to divide the service with Mr. Rowen, but on this occasion he signified his intention of taking the entire service; otherwise he knew he could not keep his thoughts from dwelling on the letter in his pocket.

He read with deep feeling, and remained kneeling afterwards a little longer than usual. At breakfast-time he pondered on the answer he should give.

It appeared to him as something very marvellous that every action

of his should be brought to light, but his thoughts did not long dwell on this point. The Admiral evidently knew of his farewell of the preceding evening, and what could he say?—explanations he could give none.

He resolved to see Ethel first, and as she had appointed eleven for their meeting, he wrote to Admiral Hatton, saying he would be at his house at two o'clock.

Now Miss Hatton had requested her father, as a particular favor, that he would say nothing to Ethel of what he had seen until the Vicar had been allowed to explain it. She carried her point with much difficulty, but finally prevailed, so that it was with an unclouded brow and tolerably light heart that Ethel advanced to meet him at the appointed time and place. He read in her face in a moment that she had heard no fresh news, and was glad of it.

"Now, Phil," she said, brightly, "I have come to hear all you have to tell me, and I have also come quite prepared to be scolded for my past conduct."

He smiled, very much pleased.

"Would it be too far for you to go to the wood, my darling?" he asked; "we cannot talk very well in the high-road."

"Not at all," she answered, readily, "I have always loved that wood ever since—ever since—you know."

"And so have I," he replied, heartily. "I never spent such an hour in my life as that in which I first walked through the wood with you."

"And, Phil, I hope you have come to tell me that it has been entirely false, what has been said about you and the Cove, and that you don't like any one else better than me, and that after this there is going to be nothing but peace between us."

"I can most truthfully tell you that I do not like any one else better than you," he replied, earnestly; "and I most assuredly hope there is going to be nothing but peace between us; but for the rest, Ethel, I shall be compelled to appeal to your love and forbearance."

He winced slightly as he spoke.

"On account of—those people?" she said, slowly.

"Even so."

After this there was complete silence between them, until they entered the wood and walked towards the narrow, winding paths.

No longer hand in hand, no longer so filled with sentiment of the highest kind that even words were not necessary. Instead of this there were a man and woman keenly impressed with the hard nature of the realities of life, and care and distrust walked between them.

A great many leaves had already fallen; they lay in heaps about their feet. The trees looked dull and sombre, and the day, though warm, was not bright. The sea in the distance showed occasionally through the branches; it looked grayish-green.

As the trees began to meet overhead he turned to her.

"Ethel," he said, gently, "remember what we talked of in this very place—remember our love and our trust, and hear me now."

"Yes, Phil," she answered, placing her hand in his.

"Circumstances have arisen, my darling, for which I am in no degree responsible; that is to say, as to their primary causes. These have placed me in a most ambiguous position apparently. I have given my most sacred word that I will not reveal them even to you, though had I known the evil results of this promise I should not have done so. In one way, however, perhaps it is best. Had I confided in you, your father would still have insisted on your breaking off your engagement (and that he will now try to make you do so I am sure of); and when you declined—and I think you will decline, my darling—he would have urged you for your reasons for faith in me. If *he* knew them, every one would know them, and that must not be. I ask you now, Ethel, to believe in me without reasons, and in the face of slanderous reports, because you love me and know that I love you with all my heart."

"But why should my father try to break off our engagement more now than a week ago?"

The Vicar flushed slightly.

"A circumstance took place last night which in some manner has become known to him. I will tell it to you with my own lips, Ethel, entreating you to believe that I have done no wrong, and were it left to my own free will I would tell you *everything*."

"What is it?" said the girl, withdrawing her hand and facing him.

"Before I tell you let me assure you of one thing, my darling—that this reserve is only for a time. It is not my intention to keep a secret from you for all time; trust me for three months, Ethel, only for three months. Three months will probably put an end to all secrecy—six *must*. Delay our marriage till then, if you prefer it—though to me this will be a great trial—but trust me for that time."

"I will try to do so," she replied, gravely, "though I wish there were not obliged to be secrets between us. Now, what is it that my father knows?"

The Vicar still delayed his communication; he called his dog, who had accompanied him, and sent him away again in search of a stick. Then he spoke resolutely.

"Last night, my darling, I went to see those people at the Cove. After this they will trouble you no more. I said good-bye to her alone, and I took her in my arms and kissed her. That is what your father will tell you."

Her eyes sparkled angrily. "*You* did this, Phil! *You*? And she a married woman!"

"And she a married woman," he repeated, sadly; "but I declare to you before God that I am free of blame."

"You need not asseverate so strongly," she replied, coldly; "I suppose your affection was Platonic, but it is carrying matters rather far, I think."

"Ethel!" he returned, "have you lost *all* your faith in me?"

She looked into his earnest eyes and saw how his face glowed with deep feeling.

"Phil," she said, quickly, I love you so *dearly*; I will have faith in you even now if you will tell me that you did not love her, although you kissed her."

He made no reply.

"*Did you, do you love her, Phil?*" she asked, wildly.

"I do not love her in the same way as I do you—or as much. I love you more than all, Ethel."

She turned from him.

"I will not have your love, if it be shared by others. I told you I would give you my opinion of you at Christmas; I will give it now, if you wish—I have lost my respect for you."

He held out his hands and spoke, facing her.

"I appeal to you for the last time, Ethel. Has not my love spoken, has not my manner of life spoken during the time you have known me? Let the past be forgotten until such time as I can explain it, and trust me for the future."

For a moment she wavered, her love almost turning the balance in his favor. And then her conscience stepped in and she felt she could not love him if she did not reverence him; and how should she do so knowing what she knew? The accusations she had heard returned in fullest force.

"I *can't*, Phil, I *can't*. You will be my clergyman as well as my lover, and my faith in you will be gone," she said, brokenly.

"Go, then," he replied, sternly; "from henceforth go out of my life. You who have no trust can have no love."

She stood still—the consciousness of what she was losing coming over her—and remained thus until he took her by the arm and led her until they reached the high-road. He opened the gate for her, but did not pass through himself.

"Go," he said again, but this time very gently, "and may God be with you also!"

Then, leaving her, he plunged into the thickest recesses of the dusky woods, and lay down on his face, covering his eyes with his hands, which, when he removed them at length, were wet with tears.

CHAPTER XXII.

CALLED TO ACCOUNT.

PUNCTUALLY at two o'clock the Vicar presented himself at Admiral Hatton's gates. Miss Hatton met him, her rich color mantling in her face.

"I want to speak to you a moment, Mr. Manley," she said, "before you see my father. Ethel has been telling me something of what passed between you this morning. I am ashamed of my sister. Were I in her place nothing would have made me lose my faith in you. I have not lost it now."

"I thank you, Miss Hatton," he returned, gravely.

The "Miss Hatton," instead of "Gertrude," struck her.

"Is your parting final?" she asked, in anxiety.

"It is quite final," he replied.

"Ethel is a fool," said Miss Hatton, sharply, and turning away with tears in her eyes.

At the front door the Vicar heard Admiral Hatton's voice, and could not avoid listening to the words—"I saw him kissing and hugging her with my own eyes, Mrs. Leslie, before my very face."

"Did he see you?" he heard, in Mrs. Leslie's quiet tones, and the rejoinder struck his quick ears.

"Not he; I looked through the window."

"Oh!" returned Mrs. Leslie, with more expression in the word than the Vicar had thought possible.

Then the door was opened, but Mr. Manley refused to be shown into the drawing-room; he said he would wait in the hall until the Admiral was made aware of his presence. It was rather a shabby hall as to furniture, but the girls invariably brightened it with great pots of flowers and flowering shrubs. The Vicar thought of Ethel, and hoped that at least the sight of her might be spared him. All traces of his recent agitation had left him; he wore his usual composed demeanor. As he stood in the hall he heard the Admiral exclaim, in loud tones, "Of course I looked through the window; I would look through twenty windows, if it concerned the happiness of my girls;" and again Mrs. Leslie's voice replied, "Oh!" The Admiral then came out, looking very red and tumbled, his hair pushed off his forehead, his necktie on one side. He glanced at the Vicar's scrupulously correct costume with some disdain.

"You don't look like a man in any anxiety," he said, gruffly, "with your smug appearance and collar as white as snow. Look at me."

The Vicar did look at him—looked him full in the face.

"You must excuse me, sir," he said, quietly, "but I have not come here to-day to listen to remarks on my personal appearance. I shall be glad if you will enter on your business with me without delay, as I am really pressed for time."

The Admiral led the way into the dining-room, which was empty, and sat down in an arm-chair. The Vicar remained standing.

"Why don't you take a chair?" said Admiral Hatton, testily.

"Thank you, I prefer to stand," said the Vicar, courteously; "I do not suppose you will detain me long."

"You can't possibly have any excuse to make for yourself, Manley, you know; still I am willing to give you the chance. What did you mean by your conduct last night, kissing that wretched woman in my very presence?"

The Vicar's eyes flashed.

"I am prepared to be called to account by you, Admiral Hatton," he replied, sternly; "but I utterly decline to listen to imputations against one who is as good a woman as ever lived."

"Very well," returned the Admiral, promptly; "well, leave the woman out of the question. What did you mean by it, sir?" and

again raising his voice and thumping his hand on the table, "I say, *what* did you mean by it?"

"Were I speaking to you simply on the ground of being one gentleman in the presence of another, I should decline entirely to answer your question," said the Vicar, speaking in the tone of authority he sometimes used when giving advice; "but as I admit you have been placed in different relations to me, although those relations will now be severed, I am willing to clear myself as far as I am able. But first you must allow me to inquire by what right you made yourself a spy on my actions, and looked into a private room?"

"Right!" roared the Admiral, "by every right. I'm not at all ashamed of it, and I'll publish that, and your conduct, all over the place."

"In that case," said the Vicar, gravely, "I entirely refuse to offer you any explanation of my conduct."

He threw his head somewhat back as he spoke; his face was set and determined.

"You decline, do you?" said the Admiral, in the same loud tones; "but I'll *make* you. You seem to have entirely forgotten, young man, that I am church-warden to the people of Newforth. I will call a meeting, and you *shall* account for yourself, my fine fellow."

"I have by no means forgotten the fact," said the Vicar, sternly; "I am quite prepared to attend that meeting, and justify myself as far as I am able. But as you have shown me no courtesy on this occasion, and as my engagement with your daughter is now broken off, I prefer to say nothing further on the subject to you, except in your official capacity. It is exceedingly painful to me that my last visit to a house where I have received much kindness should be of the nature of this."

Admiral Hatton felt some remorse.

"You needn't go off in such a hurry; sit down and tell me what it really means."

"As you purpose calling a meeting, sir," said the Vicar, gently, "I should really prefer reserving what I have to say. It is very painful to a man to be called on to defend himself many times over, especially a man in my position. Added to which I am really pressed for time. I have made an appointment for a certain hour."

"Where are you going?" asked Admiral Hatton, suspiciously.

"That, sir, can scarcely matter to you," returned the Vicar, his courteous manner in full force.

"It does matter to me," said the Admiral.

"I am going to answer your question, sir," said the Vicar, coldly, "though I decline to allow your right to put it. I am now going to Fisherman's Cove."

"Get out of my house, sir," thundered the Admiral.

"Most assuredly I shall go out of your house," returned the Vicar, with dignity, and walked out of the room.

Miss Hatton stopped him on the door-steps, and wrung his hands.

"Good-bye, Mr. Manley; I know you won't come here again, but God bless you"—and here her voice broke.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PARISHIONERS' MEETING.

ON leaving Fisherman's Cove, where he remained talking to Mrs. Stevens for some quarter of an hour, and looking into the now empty rooms, the Vicar called at Mr. Yorke's. Yorke took him into the library.

"It is a most serious business for you, Phil," he said, when he had listened to Mr. Manley—"a *most* serious business."

"It is," said the Vicar, gravely. "And what shall you say at the meeting?"

"What can I say?" replied his friend, gravely. "I cannot undo all the work that has been done. I wish to goodness that you had had neither part nor lot in the affair," he said, earnestly. "I live in constant fear for you."

"I am prepared possibly to lose my church; I have already lost my future wife; I do not see what worse can befall me."

"But I do," thought Yorke.

He remained silent for some moments.

"I shall see Vincent on this matter," he said; "he has great influence in the town."

The Vicar by no means relished this. It was very hard to him to think that another man's influence was required to rehabilitate him in the eyes of his own people, but he made no sign.

At five o'clock he took the service, his face very grave, but not sadder than usual. It seemed specially to comfort him this afternoon; he remained on his knees a long time, and walked into the vestry afterwards with a look of quiet peace on his countenance. Miss Hatton was present. On her return she went up to her sister, who had been crying bitterly in her own room.

"How you can believe anything wrong of a man who has such a noble face passes my comprehension, Ethel," she said, impatiently. "I haven't a single grain of sympathy for you. I would marry him to-morrow, and be sure whatever he did was right."

"I do not want your sympathy," said Ethel; "I want to be by myself."

"You are very miserable, I know, *and you deserve to be*," said her sister, as she left the room.

Yorke went over to Orton and saw Captain Vincent. But the latter was by no means enthusiastic on the subject of the Vicar's wrongs.

"It's an awkward business," he said, reflectively; "any other man

may do as he pleases, but there shouldn't be a breath of suspicion on a clergyman."

"But, Rupert," said his wife, earnestly, "*please* do anything you can for that *nice* Mr. Manley. I am sure it is totally false about him."

"It is totally false, Mrs. Vincent," said Yorke. "I speak from personal knowledge, though I am not allowed to state what I know."

"By your own account he has shown a great want of prudence," said Captain Vincent. "I really don't see what I can do."

"I thought you might attend the meeting which is called for next Saturday, and support him."

"I don't think I can do that," returned Captain Vincent, dubiously—to his wife's intense disappointment. "But if they want to take away his living, or anything of that sort, I will do what I can. I really don't feel strongly enough on the subject to be present as one of his supporters."

The meeting was arranged for Saturday evening; it was to be held at eight o'clock, at the Town Hall. Admiral Hatton had summoned the mayor and all the principal members of the congregation, to the intense disgust of Mr. Leslie.

"It is infamous," he declared; "it's the most indecent thing I ever heard of. Instead of allowing the Vicar to explain himself, quietly and privately, here he is put on his trial before a whole mob of people."

High words had ensued between the church-wardens in consequence, Admiral Hatton having given it as his reason that he would not have all the responsibility placed on his shoulders. Indeed, in place of the former friendliness that reigned, there was now dissension all over the parish. Fierce discussions were everywhere taking place as to whether the Vicar had failed in his duty or not; it was no longer the same town.

The Town Hall was almost full by a quarter to eight, for others besides the heads of families had asked for admittance. At eight o'clock punctually the Vicar appeared, followed by Mr. Yorke and Mr. Leslie. He walked up the hall with his usual quick step and manly bearing, and, though thoroughly conscious that every eye was upon him, he gave no sign that he knew it.

Now, the mayor had prepared a very bombastic speech by way of opening the proceedings, but the Vicar had been too long master in his own parish to permit this. He stepped on to the platform and at once began to speak.

"Gentlemen," he said, courteously, his quick eye taking in nearly all the people of whom the audience was composed, "you have summoned me here to-night in order to hear my explanation of a great many scandalous reports that have arisen concerning me. As to most of them I beg to assure you that they are entirely false; and as to some of them I am now ready to answer, to the best of my ability, any questions you are pleased to put to me, reserving my right to decline to answer any if I see fit."

As soon as he had finished speaking, Mr. Leslie rose.

"Before any more is said," he said, earnestly, "I wish, as one of the church-wardens of the parish, to declare my most hearty disapproval of this meeting, and to assert that I require no explanation whatever from our good Vicar, with whose conduct in every respect I am more than satisfied."

An ominous silence followed this speech, except for "hear" from Yorke.

The mayor then began to speak, but his oration was too elaborate for the impatient audience. All sorts of questions addressed to the Vicar interrupted its delivery.

"What did you go to the Cove for?" "Are you innocent or guilty?" "Who is the woman?" "What business had you to visit her so often?" and so on, mixed with direct accusations and coarsest insinuations; for the audience by no means consisted entirely of gentlemen, and more than one specimen of the British workman, in his Sunday clothes, sat grinning in a corner, admitted by favor of the verger. It was a time of intense pain to the Vicar, but he stood his ground as firmly as a rock, and faced his—good heavens!—his friends.

"I think it would facilitate matters," he said, in his quietest voice—yet so as to be heard in every part of the room—"if I were to make a statement to you, as it is utterly impossible for me to answer the unlooked-for number of your questions."

"A man and woman, with whom I was acquainted, came to Fisherman's Cove. Owing to his illness and her necessities I visited them frequently, and on one or two occasions, of importance to them, I met her out of doors. But I pledge you my most solemn word, as a clergyman and a gentleman, that nothing took place between us that was in the slightest degree wrong."

"Weren't yer seen kissing her through the window?" from a voice.

"Gentlemen," continued the Vicar, "there are certain circumstances which I cannot at present explain to you—most painful circumstances—but again I pledge you my most sacred word that if you will have patience for six months I will then explain all to you. During this time, if you prefer it, I will go away, leaving the duty in Mr. Rowen's hands."

Now Mr. Rowen had altogether declined to be present, his mind as yet not being made up which side to take.

"That won't do," said the mayor, bluntly; "you're either fit to go or to stay. If you 'ave any excuse, give it; if not, you 'ad better go altogether."

"Gentlemen, I have no more to say," returned the Vicar; "I leave you to talk over this matter among yourselves."

He left the room followed by Mr. Yorke; Mr. Leslie remained.

A babel of voices then arose. One said one thing, one another. Then Mr. Leslie at last made himself heard.

"I wonder you're not all ashamed of this," he said, "after all Mr. Manley has done in this parish, and what he has made of it,"

Conflicting voices, "kissing" heard.

"And," he continued, his zeal having now completely outrun his discretion, "if I knew that he kissed every married woman in the parish, I yet wouldn't believe he did it in the way of harm."

"You may like *your* wife kissed," said one; "*I* don't like *mine*."

"How do we know she wasn't his cousin? How do we know she wasn't his *grandmother*?" retorted Mr. Leslie.

A roar of laughter followed, in the midst of which Mr. Leslie walked out. But his speech caused the quieter members of the audience to consult together.

"Had he a sister?" they asked.

It was, however, decided that this was impossible; no one had ever heard him mention a sister, while he had often spoken openly of his brothers.

Certain members of the congregation then clustered together, headed by Admiral Hatton, and after much talking came to the conclusion they would at once send a note to the Vicar, asking him to resign or exchange his living; failing this, they would appeal to the bishop. He was to give them his decision on Monday. But before their messenger had left the vicarage gate he was recalled, while the Vicar wrote his answer. It was transcribed hurriedly, his firm handwriting ending in dashes.

Mr. Manley would *not* resign; the congregation should appeal to the bishop.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HEARTBURNINGS.

THE Vicar administered the communion, as usual, at eight o'clock the next morning. But the number of communicants was but small, and he was fully conscious it was because many of his parishioners would not now receive it from his hands.

As he came into church at eleven, behind the choir and the curate, he was again aware that every eye was upon him to see how he was bearing his troubles. There was a great sadness on his face, but, with the exception of the time when the Creeds were read, not once did he turn away from the congregation, or cover his face with his hand. His bearing was dignified and reverent, as it had ever been, and he seemed absorbed by the service. His sermon was plain and practical, as usual, delivered in his most earnest manner. Now a brother clergyman of his, on being most unjustly assailed by *his* parishioners, had preached from the text, "Be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words; though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions," and had launched out at his people in such a manner that a joke immediately circulated throughout the place, "Are you a scorpion or a thorn?" But to make use of his pulpit in such a manner would have been to Mr. Manley simply desecration. His reverence for the church itself had

always been very marked; he had entirely declined giving out notices of church entertainments, etc., therein, which at first the church-wardens had requested him to do; and to preach at his people, instead of to them, was what he could not have done.

Ethel Hatton was not in church—she felt she could not face him.

After the congregation had dispersed, the Vicar and Mr. Leslie stood outside the vestry door, looking down at the shipping and the beautiful sea in the distance.

“ ‘Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is VILE,’ ”

said the church-warden, laying most abundant energy on the word *vile*, and shaking his fist at the backs of the departing congregation.

Mr. Manley smiled.

“ *Their* rendering would be—

‘Where every prospect pleases,
And only the Vicar is vile.’ ”

“ Yes,” said Mr. Leslie, indignantly, “ I feel like the man—Julius Cæsar, wasn’t it?—who said he wished all Rome had but one neck, so that he could cut off its head. Oh, wasn’t it Julius Cæsar? Well, it was some other fellow then; I never was up in history.”

“ I have heard the speech attributed to another man,” said the Vicar; “ but it is well you cannot carry out your wishes. I am not anxious to preach to empty walls.”

He felt it as a relief to speak lightly for a few moments, his heart was so very sore. His usual Sunday duty was very heavy; indeed, on one occasion, Mrs. Leslie had made it an actual subject of complaint.

“ I assure you it quite worries me to think of all you do on Sunday, while we are enjoying ourselves. Early communion, opening of Sunday-schools, eleven-o’clock service, communion again, opening of afternoon school, afternoon service, christening, Bible-class, and evening service. It is entirely too much. The four services a day are quite enough for any two men.”

“ You should not waste your sympathy in that unnecessary manner,” he had replied.

“ I am quite aware that you don’t thank me, Mr. Manley, but I repeat, it is too much.”

“ I can rest on Monday.”

“ You ought, but *do* you?”

He smiled.

“ I have no doubt I do not do a great many things that I ought.”

But on this Sunday the Vicar made over the whole afternoon duty to Mr. Rowen, with the exception of opening the schools. He spoke a few kindly words, placing his hand on the heads of one or two of the little boys as he often did, and making some pleasant remark to them, and then he went to the vicarage.

He locked his study door, and remained alone until it was time to

prepare for evening service, when he appeared at the church, looking calm and grave and at peace.

On her road home Miss Hatton met Mr. Rowen.

"And what did you mean by not supporting your Vicar at the meeting last night, Mr. Rowen?" she said, sharply.

The unfortunate curate reddened, and was heard to murmur something about "Admiral Hatton," and "your father."

"Oh, yes, I know my father was against him; and though I don't agree with my father in the least, still he thought he had grounds. Pray, what grounds have *you*?"

"Really—really," stammered Mr. Rowen.

"Of course not; I *knew* you had none. And after all the kindness he has shown you too. If I have heard him stand up for you once, I have fifty times. And a nice return you have made!"

This roused even Mr. Rowen.

"And how do you know I do not intend to support him, Miss Hatton? I had not made up my mind last night."

"You had better be quick about it," she returned. "If, after all you know of Mr. Manley, you can't make up your mind now, you certainly never will. I for one shall be thoroughly ashamed of you, if you desert him."

There is sometimes a great power in directness of speech when thoroughly sincere; Mr. Rowen made up his mind that he *would* stand by his Vicar.

The Hatton family were now in a most uncomfortable condition. The Admiral was thoroughly cross, Mrs. Hatton disappointed and vexed, Miss Hatton intensely indignant, and Ethel intensely wretched. In her own mind Mrs. Hatton deserved the most sympathy. The others had sentimental grievances, she a tangible one. Here was Ethel deliberately throwing away a chance of getting well settled in life. The Vicar was a nice, kind man, came of a good family, and had fully five hundred a year, which in these hard times was a very good prospect for a penniless girl. What would her daughters have to live on when their father died, she would like to know? There was no provision made for them. Go out as governesses? Ridiculous. It was a wretched life, and for every situation there were at least fifty applicants. Oh, it was cruel, to throw away their chances as they were doing! There was Gertrude, deliberately snubbing Mr. Campbell, who was well off, that is for a naval officer. Every one knew that army and navy people were poor, but *so* proud; and how much better to keep up your pride with money. Perhaps the Vicar *had* been a little foolish. Well—he was a young man, and couldn't always be a saint. If he did kiss the woman, probably there was no harm in it—it might have been a sudden impulse, and he would not do such a thing when he had a wife of his own. As for the manner in which the Admiral was raving about him, it was simply absurd. Oh, there was nothing but trouble! Instead of Ethel being married in September, she would be now always at home, and all the Christmas bills would be coming in, and she was sure she didn't know what every one was going

to do. *Ethel miserable?* If she was miserable she had nothing to do but to make it up again with Mr. Manley. He was always so kind and so fond of her that he would do anything she asked him.

"If she asked him from now till next week he wouldn't take her back, mother," said Miss Hatton—"not if she went on her knees to him."

"Nonsense," returned Mrs. Hatton.

"He wouldn't; I am sure of it. And why should he? Girls are not so scarce that he couldn't get another wife if he pleased. He must be *sick* of girls."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PROJECTED APPEAL.

FINDING that Mr. Manley had resolved not to resign, another meeting was summoned by the mayor and Admiral Hatton, for the purpose of preparing an appeal to the bishop. On being informed of this by Mr. Leslie, Mr. Yorke at once went down to Templemore to see Captain Vincent. He found Mr. Fortescue there also.

"What do you want me to do?" asked Captain Vincent, when the case had been stated to him. "I liked what I saw of Mr. Manley very much; still we know perfectly well that there *are* black sheep among clergymen, and many of them."

"That man isn't one," said Mr. Fortescue, with determination. "I am not a parson-lover myself, but I know him to be a good man. I can see it in his face; a hypocrite never had his expression yet."

"Rupert," said Mrs. Vincent, appealingly, "do try to help him."

"He needs help," returned Yorke, gravely.

"I would help him if I could; if I had a living in my gift he should have it to-morrow," said Mr. Fortescue, who rarely evinced any interest in any human being save his wife and child.

"I give in," said Captain Vincent, "as you are all against me. But, mind you, I only do so under pressure. I won't go; I'll write. The mayor was most obsequious to me one day when I went there officially; turned out the whole corporation to receive me, and I had to listen to the vilest speech it ever was my lot to hear. Added to which, a most odious brass band played completely out of tune."

Yorke laughed.

"That band is well known in Newforth; it is Manley's mortal aversion; but occasionally, by way of honoring him, they play just under his windows."

"Do you think it would do any good to ask the mayor over here—horrid old wretch as he is?" said Mrs. Vincent.

"I can't stand that, my child," said her husband; "you must help Mr. Manley some other way. I can't hear at my table, 'Your 'ealth, Captain Vincent, and 'appiness to your good lady,' and look up to see the butler grinning at my elbow."

"He wouldn't grin long," said Mrs. Vincent, "or a second time," for Captain Vincent ruled his household most completely.

So Yorke was compelled to depart accompanied only by a note, which was very short. He gave it to Mr. Leslie, who, when the meeting was at its stormiest (for every one wanted something different), presented it to the mayor. The contents were that Captain Vincent would take it as a personal favor if no appeal were made to the bishop for the present.

"Who's Captain Vincent, I should like to know, that he should dictate to me?" thundered Admiral Hatton. "A man who was a captain in the army, ranking with a junior lieutenant, talking to me, an ADMIRAL in the BRITISH NAVY!"

"Allow me to observe, in the most delicate manner in the world," said Mr. Leslie, who was now at daggers-drawn with his co-churchwarden,

"Don't make use of your boatswain's quotations," interposed the Admiral.

"Allow me to observe, in the most delicate manner in the world," repeated Mr. Leslie, coolly, "that although, according to your somewhat surprising ideas, Captain Vincent may only rank with a junior lieutenant in the navy, he is, in addition, our county member—a member of great influence in the House, and a man of great wealth and good family. And although I do not mean to insinuate for one moment that these advantages collectively are to be compared with the honor of being AN ADMIRAL IN THE BRITISH NAVY"—he spoke these words very slowly—"still I think he has some claim to ask a personal favor if he chooses."

"*My* surprising ideas!" said the Admiral, in wrath, and losing most of the remainder of the speech in his indignation at this sentence; "they are the *Queen's* ideas, the *Nation's* ideas. Where would you be now without the NAVY?"

"Probably where I am now; and I don't in the least care if I wasn't. I don't find it so remarkably pleasant as all that"—and Mr. Leslie went away.

But though the Admiral was not impressed, the other members of the meeting were; they broke up with the resolution that they would do as Captain Vincent had requested, and defer their appeal to the bishop.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ESTRANGEMENT.

ETHEL HATTON was suffering greatly. In going over their last interview she could not see that she had acted otherwise than rightly; for how could she keep up the same respect for Mr. Manley; but, at the same time, her love seemed to her greater than ever. She regretted every cold word and tone she had ever given him, and

would gladly have recalled them. She thought of his face, his expression, his unvarying kindness and tenderness to her, and her heart ached. Once or twice she made up her mind that she could not bear it, that she must ask him to overlook what had taken place, and she on her part would do the same; and she would certainly have done it but for the conviction deep down in her heart that he would *not* overlook it, that he would *not* again receive her. To remain in Newforth was dreadful to her. She longed, and yet feared, to meet him. She could not go to church in comfort, she could not walk out. So she arranged a visit to some relations at a distance, and went away.

The Vicar observed that the week-day congregations were perceptibly lessening. But this was not owing to his loss of influence, had he only known it, but because the ladies, meeting on the road to church, began to quarrel so vigorously as to the rights of the case that very often they would turn away at the very church-doors, not feeling themselves in a fit frame of mind to enter.

But by degrees he could not fail to see that the poison was slowly working; one looked another way when he passed, and another cut him dead; and a third was cold and reserved, till at last the only houses where he received the same cordial welcome as of old were those of Mr. Yorke and Mr. Leslie. He went about with a heavy heart, but he neglected no duty in consequence, although he perceived that in the poorer districts his good influence was entirely gone. At last one day when rebuking a man—with the same gentleness which it was ever his wont to display when rebuke was required—for living in open immorality, he was received with a jeer and told that “the pot need not call the kettle black.”

An impulse of anger, such as had not overcome him for years, caused the Vicar to put out his strong right hand to knock the man down, but he withdrew it instantly to his side, saying, quietly, “You are mistaken, my man; you will know better one day.”

But after this he knew that the time had arrived for him to go.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MR. MANLEY RESIGNS.

THE Vicar's decision to resign was communicated to a meeting called for the purpose of hearing it by Mr. Leslie.

“We don't want to be so 'ard on him as that,” said the mayor; “let him exchange.”

“If he isn't fit for us, why should he be fit for another parish?” retorted Mr. Leslie. “Between you all you will drive him out of England.”

“We don't wish that,” said Admiral Hatton, whose anger had considerably cooled.

Mr. Yorke was present.

"I am a witness against you," he said, gravely, "that you have done as unfortunate a deed for yourselves in driving away your Vicar as it was in your power to do. The day will come when you will regret it. Has he not been as your best friend to every one of you?"

"You needn't *rush* at us so, Mr. Yorke," said the mayor, uncomfortably—though Yorke's somewhat stately speech was the very reverse of "rushing." "Perhaps we've been a little 'asty. Well, if so, we can call him back."

"Do you suppose that such a man as Mr. Manley would come at your recall?" said Yorke, with some scorn in his voice.

The matter had been fully discussed between him and the Vicar.

"You are right, Phil; you must go," said his friend, with deep regret; "but don't be too proud to exchange with some one else."

"I will not go into *any* parish with a slur on my name," returned the Vicar.

Now Yorke was well aware that his friend had no private means, and had lived fully up to his income.

"I do hope you are not going to take pupils, Phil," he said.

"Certainly not. I purpose devoting myself to mission work abroad, in which I have always taken the greatest interest."

"Missions! become a missionary?" said Yorke, much concerned. "Oh, don't do that, Phil. A man of your culture and attainments would be quite thrown away on savages."

"I do not know that mission work is of *necessity* among savages; but I am of opinion that, inasmuch as they are in some respects like children, a cultivated man is by no means thrown away among them. It requires, I believe, a cultivated man to teach children."

"They are not like children," said Yorke, warmly. "Take our Australian aborigines, for example—dirty, degraded wretches, almost incapable of civilization."

But this speech had a totally different effect to that intended by Mr. Yorke. The Vicar's heart was so full of love to his fellow-men—for the sake of a higher love—that immediately he felt a strange pity towards those poor creatures in Australia.

"I will put myself in connection with the Church Missionary Society," he said. "I might as well go to Australia as anywhere else."

Long and earnestly did Yorke try to dissuade him, but to no purpose. It was a case of "when Greek meets Greek."

"You will do no good whatever," said Yorke; "I have seen plenty of them, and I know what I am talking about."

"I can but try."

Indeed, this was about the worst argument that Mr. Yorke could have used—the mere mention of a difficulty made the Vicar anxious to overcome it. He now entered into the project with ardor.

"There is only one advantage that I see in this mad scheme," said Yorke, at length.

"What is that?"

"That you can go out with us," for the Yorkes were on the eve of returning to Australia; "and when your mission work is proved hopeless—which I know it will be—you can stay with us for an in-

definite period (Australians always keep open house), until these wiseacres of Newforth have seen their error, and you can return in triumph *to another parish*. In one way I am very glad you are going to leave England for a time."

"Why?"

"Oh, nothing; only an idea;" returned Yorke, vaguely.

About this time a distant relative of the Vicar's died, leaving him a most unexpected and, as he termed it, providential, legacy of £400. Never was money more welcome. The income he would receive, if any, from the Church Missionary Society would, he knew, be barely sufficient to cover his actual wants; he could now take his own passage—which he purposed doing in the mail with the Yorkes—and be his own master, as far as funds were concerned. The loss of his income troubled him but little, but the loss of his church—his dearly loved church—and of his reputation, troubled him greatly. Had it not been for the missionary ardor which had now taken possession of him, he felt as if he could not have borne up so bravely. For he bore up very bravely.

A partial reaction had set in in his favor, harder to bear than the former ill-will; for it went no further than this: "As he is going away, let us make the best of it while he is here;" and he knew that they would be glad when he was gone. The living was to be given to Mr. Rowen, through the intervention of the bishop, who knew Mr. Manley well, and was not without secret hopes that matters might yet be cleared up, and that he would one day return. But even to his bishop Mr. Manley had entered into no explanation. He was anxious to leave without delay and join the Yorkes in London, whither they had now gone, knowing that procrastination was bad for all parties concerned. His arrangements were quickly made, and he prepared to leave Newforth—for good.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HIS FAREWELL.

It was on a Saturday that the Vicar prepared to pay his farewell visits—few enough, alas! in number. On Sunday evening he was to preach his farewell sermon, and leave Newforth early on Monday morning.

He first called on Mrs. Leslie, whose very distress at his departure caused her to assume a coldness she was far from feeling; but Mr. Manley was a man who saw below the surface. He shook both her hands heartily, and thanked her for all the kindness he had received from both her and her husband; and then he asked for her children; and kissed them affectionately, giving them each some toy.

"Come back soon, Mr. Manley," said little Isabel; but how could he say he would do so?

On leaving Mrs. Leslie's, he met Mrs. Hatton. He stopped.

"Will you shake hands with me before I go, Mrs. Hatton?" he asked, with his old, pleasant smile on his face.

"Of course I will," she replied.

"I am very glad to have met you. I could not call to say good-bye, after the Admiral forbidding me your house. But will you tell him from me that I trust he will one day see matters in a different light; and give him my kind regards, if he will accept them. Also"—after a pause—"to Miss Hatton, and"—a longer pause—"and to Ethel."

"I am sure it is very good of you," said Mrs. Hatton; "and why every one has been made so wretched, and why you could not have stayed and married Ethel, I'm sure I don't know. Well, good-bye, my dear, and I hope you'll be happy."

At the entrance to the town he met Captain and Mrs. Vincent.

"If there ever was a henpecked husband in this world it is I," Captain Vincent had been saying to his wife, knowing that he could well afford to jest on this point. "Here am I dragged no end of a distance to say good-bye to a man I don't care a straw about."

"How do you do, Mr. Manley?" he said, graciously, as the Vicar approached. "We are glad to have met you."

"We came over on purpose," said Mrs. Vincent, "and we wish you every happiness in the new life to which you are going, and we are very sorry to lose you."

"The town will always remember you with gratitude," he returned, "when the peal of bells is heard."

"The town wouldn't have had them but for *you*," she replied; "I wish you had remained to hear them."

"I wish I could," he returned, gravely, and bade them farewell.

His poorer neighbors he had already visited, and now, out of all this large town of Newforth, there was no other house at which he purposed calling. He looked up at the spire in passing; the building was going on as fast as possible, and then it did seem hard that he who had been the sole originator, the prime mover in the business, should not be allowed to remain to see its completion.

It was now time to prepare his sermon. He shut himself in his study, and began to think. It is needless to say that during the entire week many of all his best thoughts had been given towards that sermon; but now these seemed to leave him, and a strange and unusual bitterness came over him. He thought of the parish as it had been on his arrival, and of what it was now. He thought of the many good works he had originated and carried on, of how his entire heart and thoughts and time and energies had been directed to his work. And this was his reward—to be, in effect, turned out by those whom he had benefited so greatly! But no sooner had these ideas passed through his mind than he remembered the Apostle Paul—thought of all his zeal and persecutions and martyrdom; and after thinking thus, he exclaimed, in deep humility, "What am *I* beside such a man as he?" It was in this frame that he composed his sermon, which, though to be principally extemporaneous, was well thought out.

He chose for his text the words of the same apostle: "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." But it was not of himself—his own works, his own wrongs, his own departure—that he spoke. He spoke of St. Paul, and how gigantic was the work he did, compared to that of the present ministers of the Church, and how they might well feel humble beside him; but his congregation applied the parallel differently, and, erring as they thought him, were still visibly moved. Then, in one sentence only, he bade them farewell, with a perceptible tremor in his voice; for he had loved his people greatly.

In the last pew in the church sat Ethel, who had returned the night before. She sobbed silently during the entire sermon. He would be gone on the morrow, and she—she whom he had loved before all the world—would be the only one who was not permitted to wish him farewell.

"I *must* see him, Gertrude," she said. "I will go to the vicarage sooner than not do so."

"You shall *not* go," said Miss Hatton. "If you have any real affection left for him—and he deserves far more than *you* ever gave him—you will sacrifice your own wishes, and not add to his pain, when he must be feeling so much. Besides, what could you say if you did see him? You have no faith in him, and you can't ask him to marry you. I don't see what you could say."

But Ethel's sobs at last made her sister relent.

"I tell you what," she said, "if he has any remnant of liking left for you at all, though I dare say he hasn't, he won't go without having a last look at our house. I will watch for him this evening—I want to say good-bye to him myself, and you can take a look at him; but, remember, you are *not* to speak."

With this poor comfort Ethel was forced to be content. The evening was cold and dark; the two girls put on thick shawls, and walked up and down the garden walk which skirted the lane.

On leaving the church the Vicar—Vicar for the last time, he thought—had paced up and down his garden, lost in thought. And then, the memory of his love coming strongly over him, he thought he could not leave the place without looking once more at the house where he had known so much happiness. It was quite dark—no one would see him; but the Misses Hatton heard his well-known footsteps.

"Kneel down by the hedge; quick, Ethel, out of sight," whispered her sister. "You *sha'n't* speak to him to make him more wretched. Do you hear what I say?"

Ethel obeyed.

"Mr. Manley," exclaimed Miss Hatton, "come here and say good-bye to me over the hedge."

"Good-bye, Miss Hatton," he said, gravely. "I shall always remember you with the deepest gratitude, and I trust you may meet with the happy future you deserve."

He shook hands warmly, but, ere he could go, two hands—two

soft, small hands, the touch of which he knew well—caught hold of his right hand, and he felt a kiss imprinted, while it became wet with tears. He could not trust himself to speak; he turned away suddenly, and walked down the lane. But before he had reached the end he placed his hand on his face, its back to his cheek, and kissed the tear-drop that touched his lips.

"The last of my weakness," he said; and he would fain have been spared this additional pain.

Then he went into the church—the dark, quiet, solemn church—across which a faint ray of moonlight was struggling, and there he remained one hour. The moonlight was on the shipping and the harbor when he went up to his room.

"I have bidden farewell to Newforth now," he said.

Mr. Leslie and Mr. Rowen saw him off the next morning, the latter under the impression that he had done his duty to his Vicar like a man. But he would now himself be "the Vicar," and it would scarcely have been in human nature if he had not held his head a little higher in consequence.

Mr. Manley kept up cheerfully to the last, saying, as he grasped Mr. Leslie's hand, "I dare say you will say of me, 'We could have better spared a better man.' I know that I shall not be forgotten by you, so you know you will not be forgotten by me."

"I shall say nothing of the kind," returned Mr. Leslie, "because there is no better man to be found in the three kingdoms."

CHAPTER XXIX.

AUSTRALIAN LIFE.

It was not until they were fairly on their voyage that Yorke breathed freely.

"I lived in dread, Phil, lest you should be had up for conspiring to defeat the ends of justice," he said.

"That idea never once occurred to me," said Mr. Manley.

"I am very glad I did not suggest it; I assure you it was constantly on my mind."

"Ah, Yorke, you are a true friend!" returned Mr. Manley, warmly.

"One half of one's friends add vastly to one's troubles by suggesting evils. Are you sure I was in danger of this?"

"Not quite sure, but very nearly."

Mr. Manley paced up and down the deck thoughtfully; he was thankful he had not known of this additional fear. He was very grave, very thoughtful now, though that courtesy which had ever been so prominently displayed by him was not given up. Many of the passengers would have been glad to make friends with him, but he did not care to make friends.

Their destination was Adelaide, from which city Yorke's station was distant some three hundred miles. Mr. Manley purposed ac-

companying him and his wife and child thither, and remaining until all arrangements for going towards the interior had been made. He had received all necessary information and directions from the Church Missionary Society, and was to advance a considerable distance up the country, in company with a Scripture-reader, who understood something of the natives, and another helper.

The station life pleased Mr. Manley greatly. Yorke was very well off, and lived in good style in the bush. His house was large, and most hospitably kept; his horses were good and numerous; his gardens were in perfection. The show of hothouse flowers, growing, almost untended, in bushes in the open air, surprised Mr. Manley; he admired them greatly. But it was in vain that both Mr. and Mrs. Yorke would have had him prolong his stay when once he had heard he could proceed.

"It is work that I want," he said; "really hard work."

"You will have it in plenty," said Yorke to himself, dismally; "hard work, and depressing work, and fruitless work, and disgusting work!" for Yorke was not a missionary sympathizer.

However, Mr. Manley departed, nothing daunted, carrying with him a brave heart and unbounded energy. There was a tribe—a peaceful tribe enough—among whom no work had as yet been done; they were too far off. To them Mr. Manley and his helpers were to go. The nearest settlement or town to them would be Camper-town; by a stream thirty miles beyond they pitched their tent, and soon managed to erect a couple of rude huts, with the assistance of their nearest neighbors.

Mr. Manley was prepared to undergo any hardships; he had counted the cost fully before leaving England, and knew it would be considerable, but not for a moment did he flinch.

The blacks, certainly, impressed him most unfavorably; their habits were so disgusting, their minds so dense! But Mr. Manley's idea was to teach the children more especially, and to train them to better things. With them his influence was great; they would run to him, their fathers and mothers looking on in stolid indifference, squatting about in groups on their blankets and smoking. He endeavored to teach by example rather than precept, and would often perform small kindnesses and bestow small gifts on them.

His coadjutors he liked fairly well; they were well-meaning men, though no companions, in the best sense of the word. They prepared the untempting meals, for which they at times procured supplies from Campertown, and taught one or two of the native women to help them in cooking.

The natives evidently looked on them with a friendly but most indifferent eye. It occurred to Mr. Manley that, as there was no translation of any portion of the Bible in their tongue—their dialect considerably differing from that of most of the tribes—he would endeavor to translate St. John into their heathenish phrase; but the labor was enormous, for their sounds were barely articulate. He would not give in, however; he worked on bravely, smiling with the same pleasantness at the children, and trying his hardest to re-

strain the disgust which sometimes would arise within him. Letters from England reached him ; some from Mr. Leslie, at Newforth, telling him how the spire was now finished, and the peal of bells had been rung. He did not answer them; he was not anxious to continue any connection with his old life—the life when he had been the honored, beloved Vicar of Newforth. What was he now? But he said himself that he was now more fully honored, inasmuch as he was counted worthy to suffer. His cheeks were growing very hollow, but his words were cheery and bright. Trouble he never spared himself, nor fatigue nor toil, when it could benefit others; his life was purely unselfish. He seemed to disregard all discomfort—which, to a gently-born English gentleman, must have been very great—and to think only of his work.

Yorke had proposed taking a journey to see him, though it was a very long distance, but for this he was not anxious; he knew it would unsettle him. Then there arrived a day when his two helpers came to him and said that, from most unmistakable signs, they were of opinion that an unfriendly influence was beginning to work among the tribe, and they considered it was no longer safe to live among them. They wished to return to regions more civilized. But to Mr. Manley this seemed like putting his hand to the plough and drawing back. They might go, he said, but he should remain. He still had hopes he was doing good.

“You cannot remain alone,” they said; but he was firm that he would not go.

So, with manifest reluctance, they departed; and when he had seen the last of them his heart seemed to sink within him, but only temporarily. His courage returned, his will remained indomitable; henceforth he would labor alone. And so this advanced Christian, this accomplished and intellectual man, this cultivated and finished gentleman, was left alone in the midst of black, heathen savages.

CHAPTER XXX.

MR. ROWEN'S TROUBLES.

MATTERS had not improved in Newforth. The new Vicar was totally incapable to hold the reins of government with the firm hand which had characterized the dealings of Mr. Manley. In this world there is nothing so hardly visited as weakness. Mr. Rowen lived in fear and trembling.

To begin with, his lady helpers tormented him out of his very life. Whereas Mr. Manley would have had his own way, without a dissentient voice, Mr. Rowen, in trying to adopt every one's way, was in the position of the old man with the ass. In trying to please every one he pleased no one. He began to dislike the very sound of his late Vicar's name. It was always, “We can't do that, Mr. Rowen; Mr. Manley never asked us;” or, “What a much better

system there was in Mr. Manley's time." So often, indeed, were speeches of this kind made, that at last Mr. Rowen was goaded into retorting it was a great pity that they had driven so much perfection as Mr. Manley away.

"Yes, it is," returned Miss Hatton; "and we have only regretted it once, and that is *always*."

Now, the only lady for whom the new Vicar had the smallest liking was Miss Hatton, who snubbed him unmercifully. He was terribly afraid of her, but he admired her. The attentions with which Mr. Manley was persecuted were not extended to him; the girls laughed at his tall, ungainly figure, his awkward gait, and his hesitating manner.

He had thought it would be a delightful post to be a vicar, but, lo! his path was full of thorns. Even the verger did not hesitate to dictate to him openly; and the cook—for Mrs. Jonson had remained at the vicarage—did not scruple to inform him that he could not have as good a dinner as he wished (he being far more particular as to his creature comforts than Mr. Manley), or she would have nothing to give to the poor.

He once exclaimed, under his breath, "Bother the poor!" but this fact is only mentioned in the strictest confidence.

He was imposed on by the working classes right and left now that Mr. Manley was not there to discriminate between the claims of the really needy and impostors, and at last he learned to believe that all the poor were impostors, having been victimized so often. He always buttoned up his coat when he saw a poor woman approaching, yet, at the same time, was *done* with the greatest ease. Miss Hatton one day, on witnessing a proceeding of the kind, could barely restrain herself from calling him a fool.

"I tell you what it is, Mr. Rowen," she said, decidedly, "if you are not firmer you will be got hold of and married by some widow before you know what you are doing, and what will become of you then?"

"I should become a married man," returned the Vicar, with a feeble attempt at a joke, and blushing scarlet.

"You had better let *me* manage the district meetings for you," she replied. "You are talked down, and no one listens to you."

"Oh, if you would!" said the poor Vicar, gratefully; "and if—if there is any *real* need for me, I can be sent for."

"But you must visit; be sure you visit. I will make out the list of the houses you are to go to."

"Very well," said Mr. Rowen, meekly.

In the solitude of his study he exclaimed, "I shall be driven frantic by these women; it's awful. One tells me to do one thing, and another another. I wish, with all my heart, that Manley was here to deal with them."

So, by degrees, his power went from him, as far as the richer classes were concerned. The church-wardens both bullied him in their different ways, Mr. Leslie having taken up the totally indefensible position that *any* vicar coming after Mr. Manley must be an intruder;

and Admiral Hatton being rendered suspicious by his recent experience.

The organist chose the hymns without even consulting the Vicar, and, when mildly remonstrated with, replied that, in Mr. Manley's time, there had been no fault found; knowing, as he spoke, that he would not, in Mr. Manley's time, have ventured to choose the hymns.

Mr Rowen liked congregational singing; the choir preferred anthems and most elaborate and highflown chants, in which none of the congregation could join, and have them they would, and did. They said they would resign in a body otherwise, and Mr. Rowen was afraid to tell them they were welcome to do so.

The difficulty of reconciling his cross-grained affairs of every-day life with the elaborate, elevated language in which he had been wont to indulge caused his sermons to become more obscure, and he far oftener told his congregation that they "all knew what he meant."

The communicants began to fall off in number, the offertories became smaller. That earnest zeal in the former Vicar which had been at the root of the people's zeal was now wanting. Mr. Rowen began to complain, and scold the congregation in his sermons. The falling off became more apparent.

"We never had one word of complaint from Mr. Manley during the whole time he was with us," they said.

"Ah!" returned Mr. Leslie, triumphantly, "you are now beginning to find out what you have lost."

He had received one letter, and one only, from Mr. Manley, written when he first landed at Adelaide. But part of this letter was quite incomprehensible to Mr. Leslie—a part in which Mr. Manley stated that, although he had never said as much in actual words, he deeply regretted the losses Mr. Leslie had sustained, how personally responsible in a measure he felt, and how grieved he had been.

"Perhaps he has had a sunstroke," said Mr. Leslie, reflectively, "and it has affected his brain. How in the world can *he* have anything to do with our losses?"

"Ah, Frank!" said Mrs. Leslie, "we shall never have such a vicar again."

"You think a vast deal of him, young woman!"

"You may be quite sure, Frank," returned Mrs. Leslie, laughing, "that I should not praise him so openly if there was any harm in it. A woman of my age—"

"You are not quite a Methuselah, my dear."

"With two children—"

"And an attached husband," he again interrupted.

"And an attached husband, can say anything she pleases, I should think."

"Certainly, so long as she adds that she is attached to her husband."

"I'll say it now, Frank," she said, with a laugh; "and who is also attached to her husband. Will that satisfy you?"

"Perfectly," said Mr. Leslie, who, his wife knew, had been only joking.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ADMIRALTY BALL.

THE *Devastation* had come to Seafort, also Captain Worsley, who had brought his ship round from Plymouth. The Lords of the Admiralty were coming to inspect, and the admiralty ball was to take place.

Mr. Campbell had again been taken into favor. Miss Hatton's conscience had somewhat accused her for the series of snubs she had administered to him for so long a time past, and she now made herself very agreeable.

That Mrs. Hatton and the girls were to go to the admiralty ball was a matter of course. Ethel had declared her intention of staying away—she had no heart for balls now; but her father contested the point so hotly that she gave way. He was not going himself; he was too old for balls, he said; but, in reality, being on half-pay, he was not over-anxious to meet the admirals in command.

Captain Worsley had come over to dine previous to the ball—in uniform, of course, as the Lords of the Admiralty were to be present.

"I shouldn't wonder if he were to propose to you to-night, Gertrude," said Ethel, as the two girls were dressing; "he does nothing but follow you with his eyes."

"I hope he won't to-night," returned Miss Hatton, "because Mr. Campbell will be there, and it is so horridly awkward sometimes to have two such—strings to your bow."

"Shall you accept him?"

"I really can't say," replied Miss Hatton, who was looking brilliantly handsome in her white satin dress. "You look very nice," she said to Ethel; "very nice indeed; but as you *are* going, do look as if you enjoyed it."

"I never enjoy anything now," said Ethel, in a low voice.

"That's not half so much consequence if you *look* cheerful. Why, gracious me! if all the people who are miserable were to look miserable, we should scarcely ever see a cheerful face. Every one has trouble of some sort or another."

Captain Worsley had secured Miss Hatton for three dances before they started.

"No," she said, firmly; "I won't promise you more."

"There is always such a run on you," grumbled that young man; "however, it is awfully good of you to give me these."

Mr. Campbell had dined on shore at Seafort with a party of brother officers. Of late his hopes with regard to Miss Hatton had consid-

erably revived; and now that Captain Worsley had again appeared on the scene, he thought it quite time to come forward, having made up his mind that he would be tolerably certain of being accepted. The dinner was of a somewhat convivial nature, many of the officers not having met one another for some time past. Mr. Campbell did full justice to the fare, and more than justice to the wine.

"Have a care, Campbell," whispered his neighbor, as he saw the young man again replenish his glass; "official ball, and all that sort of thing, don't you know?"

"All right," returned Mr. Campbell, "I'll be as sober as a lord."

"I thought it was as drunk as a lord," said his friend.

But while the dessert was on the table Mr. Campbell brought forward Miss Hatton's name in a manner he certainly would not have done had he been quite himself.

"I say she's the best girl, and the prettiest girl, and the jolliest girl in the kingdom, let any one deny it if he dares!" he asseverated.

No one apparently wished to deny it, but several amused and one or two anxious glances were given him by the company, who were all young men of admirable character.

"I'll bet you a sovereign," said one, "that she won't have you if you ask her."

"Done!" returned Mr. Campbell, promptly; "and I'll give you two to one all round the table, if you like."

"Done!" they all replied, and booked the bet.

"I will ask her to-night," he continued.

"We won't hold you to a day or two, old fellow," said one; "within a week will do."

On their way to the ball a quiet word passed round among themselves.

"He's right enough *now*," said one afterwards; and continued, turning to Mr. Campbell, "I say, you had better not go in for too much champagne to-night, or perhaps you will lose your bet."

"So much the better for you," returned Mr. Campbell.

It was greatly to Miss Hatton's surprise that at the ball she beheld Mr. Rowen, for it was not his custom to attend balls. He did not dance, but sat down and watched her, enduring grinding torments. He was now so much in love that he literally could not keep away, his ardor having vastly increased since Miss Hatton had relieved him of so much of the management of parish affairs, and he knew that he would be kept in countenance to-night by the dockyard chaplain. But not a word did he say to that gentleman; he sat in a corner and fixed his eyes on his charmer.

Mr. Campbell and the officers with whom he had dined were present when she arrived. Before Mr. Campbell could say a word, she found herself besieged, and her card entirely filled.

"What dances are you going to give me?" he asked, when he could obtain a hearing.

"I'm really very sorry, but I haven't one, unless I engage myself twice over. Well, perhaps I can do that; I will try and do so, anyhow."

He departed very savage, and made his way to the refreshment-room.

"I flatter myself we did that neatly," said one of his friends; "if she had cared a button about him she would have reserved him a couple of dances."

Meantime Miss Hatton had taken pity on the Vicar.

"Aren't you going to dance, Mr. Rowen?" she asked.

"I am not," he answered, dismally.

"Are you going to have any supper?"

"If you will come too."

"I can't now, but I will soon. Yes, I really will. Come for me in half an hour."

So when half an hour was over the Vicar discovered her on the point of waltzing. She turned from her partner at once.

"So sorry, but I am engaged to Mr. Rowen for this," and, bowing slightly, took his arm.

By some chance he procured her a seat in the corner of the supper-room, and when she had been duly refreshed, she had some grapes. Now, as every one knows, if you choose to be a whole day eating a bunch of grapes, you can; and Miss Hatton, knowing that her remaining dance with Captain Worsley would not come off for some time, was quite content to remain laughing and talking with Mr. Rowen.

But he, poor man, had none of the ready ease of the man of the world displayed by the late Vicar. He could only talk on one subject, and that was Church and Church affairs. He began to tell her of a purchase of cloth he had made for the working party from a poor, shipwrecked sailor, who had secured this portion of goods from the wreck; it was a great bargain, he said, and would be most useful.

She looked at him with mingled amusement and contempt.

"*You* make a bargain, Mr. Rowen! If you ever bet, I will bet you anything you please that the cloth is shoddy, and that you have been regularly *done*. Don't you know that all that nonsense about shipwrecked sailors is one of the oldest of old tricks?"

Mr. Rowen replied that he did not know it, that he had formerly lived in a country place.

"If you would do what the Vicar used to tell us"—for, to Mr. Rowen's disgust, she insisted on generally calling Mr. Manley "the Vicar"—"you wouldn't go out of your way to invent work, Mr. Rowen, but would do what lies nearest to your hand. It is my work to buy the material for the working party."

"You are always criticising me and my deeds," he responded, meekly. "Were you so severe a critic to Mr. Manley?"

"*Of course* not," she responded, readily. "The first time I heard him preach I criticised, it having been my lot, unfortunately, to be thrown at one time with clergymen for whom I had no great respect; but after hearing Mr. Manley once or twice, I simply came to be *taught*, and accepted every word he said as given with the authority of the Church."

"I, too, have the authority of the Church."

"So you have—sometimes," she replied, promptly; "but—you must really excuse my candor—*your* mantle of authority seems constantly to be slipping from you, while his never did. Wherever you saw him, you couldn't forget he carried Church authority with him."

"You seem to take a *very* warm interest in him, Miss Hatton; a most remarkable interest, I may say," said Mr. Rowen, in an injured voice.

"Do you mean, am I in love with him?" asked the young lady, frankly.

"That is my meaning."

"Then, no! I am not. Dear me, haven't you even sufficient knowledge of human nature to be aware that, if I were in love with him, I should say nothing about him. Pray, do you talk of your deepest feelings—of your religious feelings, let us say? for if you do, you are the only person I know who does, except perhaps occasionally to a clergyman."

"I have sufficient knowledge of human nature to know that you are extremely rude to me," returned Mr. Rowen, now fairly brought to bay.

She laughed. "Yes, I believe I am. Well, never mind. I am now ready to go back to the ball."

Mr. Rowen went home at once, his evening having been, in his opinion, a marked failure.

Ethel's evening had been very wearisome to her. She had engaged herself for every dance, looking on it as an ordeal which must be gone through with; but in none of her partners did she take any interest. She could not remove her thoughts from the Australian wilds, where she imagined Mr. Manley was enduring every hardship. She pictured him in every way she could think of; but even she could not realize the dismal situation he was actually in. His voice and smile were ever present to her, his words constantly sounded in her ears. *Had* he failed in his duty? oh, if she could only know that he had not. These ideas were in her mind even while waltzing with a young commander, who was paying her devoted attention.

At the close of the dance Mr. Campbell came up.

"You are going to give me a dance now, I hope," he said; "you promised me one."

She smiled.

"Very well, I must disappoint Mr. Maguire; I don't suppose he will mind much, and I do not care about him."

"All right," returned Mr. Campbell, looking pleased. He appeared a very fine-looking young man to-night, his full dress uniform set his figure off to the best advantage, and his face, though flushed, was certainly handsome, with its accompaniments of well-trimmed flaxen beard and mustache.

"There's a sort of a balcony out here, or veranda place," he said; "will you come?"

"Yes," returned Ethel, readily; "it will be cool out there."

The veranda overlooked the sea—indeed, the ballroom was built almost on the beach. Mr. Campbell took her to the farther corner, apart from the other couples, and leaned over the railings, pressing her hand.

"I say," he exclaimed, suddenly, "this is very jolly, isn't it? awfully jolly to be here alone with you."

Ethel laughed.

"I really did not know I was such an attraction."

"Know it? you do know it," he rejoined, fiercely. "I have always loved you, and I wish to marry you."

She withdrew her hand from his arm.

"Mr. Campbell!" she exclaimed, in surprise, "I assure you I never had the slightest idea of it; and after the very marked attention you have paid my sister, I do not feel at all flattered."

"*My sister!*" he repeated, scornfully; "I never so much as thought of your sister; it was always you."

"You disguised your feelings very effectually," she returned, with some contempt. "I never had the smallest notion that you cared for me."

"Will you have me? Say Yes. I don't want to be a snob, but I have something to live on besides my beggarly pay, and you'll find me a very tolerable fellow for a husband."

"I reject your offer most decidedly," said Ethel; "and I am much astonished that you should have made it. I wish to return to the ballroom, if you please."

He took her back in sulky silence, and, returning to the veranda, watched the dancers in anger.

Several of his brother officers from time to time passed him. One or two held out sovereigns towards him, and one exclaimed, "Ho, ho! the pity of it!" which rendered him furious.

"I don't think he has proposed to her," said another. "I haven't seen him speak to her all the evening; she's in a corner over there with Worsley, who is precious far gone also."

At two o'clock Mrs. Hatton and her daughters left. Gertrude was on the arm of Captain Worsley, Ethel on that of the naval chaplain of the *Devastation*. Mr. Campbell watched them gloomily, and, as they passed him on the way to the carriage, an awful suspicion dawned on him. He had proposed to THE WRONG GIRL!

CHAPTER XXXII.

MR. CAMPBELL'S VISIT.

It was, indeed, true. Mr. Campbell had proposed to Ethel instead of Gertrude. The wine which he had taken had muddled his brain, and he had been fully under the impression he was talking to Miss Hatton in the veranda. He went away not only furious, but

seriously concerned. What could he do? He was quite sure that, under the circumstances, Ethel would repeat every word to her sister, and, with a girl like Gertrude, he feared his chance was now gone. It was precious awkward; precious awkward! But, not being a young man who was easily daunted, he determined to go to Admiral Hatton's house the next day and endeavor to make the best of it.

Meantime Ethel had informed her sister of the unwarrantable proposal, and her sister was excessively angry.

"I don't believe it!" she exclaimed. "I'm *sure* he was in love with me. I can't make it out. Have you been trying to cut me out with him, Ethel?" she asked, sharply.

"I cut you out; that is, try to cut you out? You know I haven't."

"It's a mystery to me," said Miss Hatton, "although I always did know that there isn't an ounce of dependence to be placed in the generality of men! But this beats me!" And then she informed her sister that Captain Worsley had proposed to her at the ball, and that he was coming to see their father the next day; or, rather, seeing it was four o'clock in the morning, that day.

"And I do hope there won't be a row," she said, "for father does take such ridiculous crotchets into his head sometimes."

Ethel wished her sister every happiness, and thought sadly of how her own prospects were blighted.

She liked Captain Worsley, she said; but, comparing him in her own mind with Mr. Manley, she decided that the former was at a tremendous disadvantage.

The interview with Admiral Hatton passed off satisfactorily on the whole.

"I wish you to understand, young man," he said, "that I won't have any son-in-law who is ashamed of her majesty's navy. Keep your hunters and welcome, if you can afford it, after your marriage, and wear your pink coat if you please; but unless you put your title, '*Commander* Henry Worsley,' on the cards you leave at private houses, you sha'n't marry my daughter, that's positive."

Captain Worsley laughed good-humoredly.

"I have explained all my circumstances to you, sir, and am willing to settle money on your daughter; but as to what I put on my cards, that is my business—come, sir, be reasonable."

But the Admiral would not be reasonable, and declined his consent until Captain Worsley had promised to sign an agreement stating that he would retain his title, and not be ashamed of the navy. The humor of the situation struck the young man so much that he consented.

"We'll have it down in black and white," said the Admiral, taking up a pen, and jotting down the particulars on a piece of paper, which Captain Worsley signed, with a roar of laughter.

He had barely left the house for Seafort when Mr. Campbell appeared. He was shown into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Hatton and the girls were sitting at work. He seemed somewhat ill at ease.

"Fine day, isn't it?" he exclaimed, and sauntered over to the window.

"What's that new shrub you have across the lawn?" he asked.

"There is nothing new," said Mrs. Hatton. Neither Gertrude nor Ethel had as yet spoken.

"If it isn't new, I have never seen it before," he returned, somewhat crossly. "I wish you would show it to me, Miss Hatton."

She was on the point of declining, when an idea that she would like to give him a piece of her mind came across her. She rose and accompanied him across the lawn.

"I say, Gertrude," he said, hurriedly, "this is an awful business. I made a great fool of myself last night."

"I dare say you did," she rejoined, carelessly; "but I prefer to be addressed as Miss Hatton by you."

"You know perfectly well that I am in love with you; that I have always been."

"I don't particularly care to hear it," she answered, sharply, "seeing that you told Ethel the same story last night."

"I know I did," he returned, pulling at the branches as he spoke; "that's what I am come about now. I made an awful mistake last night: *I thought she was you.*"

"Don't tell me anything so ridiculous," retorted Miss Hatton, "because I don't believe a word of it. You are not out of your mind, and you *couldn't* have mistaken her for me; we are not in the least alike."

"*But I did,*" said Mr. Campbell, with great energy, "or I should never have asked her, I declare solemnly. I had been having a glass of wine, you know. It is *you* I want to marry; it always was you."

"I refuse you," she returned, without a touch of pity in her voice; "refuse you absolutely and unconditionally."

The young man's face clouded.

"That is awfully hard lines," he said. "Come, think better of it, Gertrude."

"Certainly not," she replied; "the excuse you have given aggravates your offence. Do you suppose I am going to marry a man who drinks!"

"And there'll be all those fellows to settle with, hang it!" he exclaimed to himself.

But Miss Hatton heard him.

"What fellows?" she asked, sharply. "What do you mean?"

"It was nothing, only a bet," he answered, vaguely.

But she resolved to be told, and at last extracted from him an unwilling explanation.

"Well!" she exclaimed, her eyes flashing, "if you were so far left to yourself as to make me the subject of a bet at a public dinner-table, and about such a matter too, it shows me the sort of man you must be. If there were not another man in the world, I would not marry you now. More than this, I am engaged to Captain Worsley."

Mr. Campbell departed in a rage. That evening he sent two sovereigns apiece to his friends of the dinner-table, and, going up to

town the next day, made interest to be appointed to one of the ships at Plymouth.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MR. MANLEY'S EXPERIENCES.

MR. MANLEY was becoming shadowy, both in mind and body. The climate had told on him, but the mental strain to which he had been so long subject had done him far more harm. He continued his work bravely, although it was becoming a sore toil to him. He was conscious of a strong wish to lie down under such shade as could be found, instead of sitting at work at his translations, or doing his best to teach the children English words and phrases, or perform acts of kindness towards the men and women. But he would not give in, and—fearing lest self-indulgence should be at the root of this disinclination, and knowing that the manners and customs of the natives were day by day becoming more loathsome to him, his work more irksome—he sternly apportioned to himself certain hours for each self-imposed duty; and no matter what his weariness, no matter what the heat, he fulfilled it, often to lie down at night too utterly prostrated to be capable even of thought. His appetite had failed. It was as much as he could do to touch any of the food they brought him; but, knowing that without sustenance he could not support his strength, he looked on this, too, as a duty, and forced himself to partake of the untempting meals given him.

The keen, shrewd, clever, strong, practical Vicar of Newforth had departed, and in his place there was a man whose mind was given to visions and flights of the imagination. Recalling sometimes the life he had lived—the crowded, over-busy life, in which he had barely had sufficient time for necessary thought, in which, from morning till night, some one or other had appealed to him for advice or help, or spiritual counsel, or sometimes merely on vain pretexts—he marvelled, and asked himself if it indeed were he.

With these black men there was association, but no communion whatever; he lived as much alone as if, indeed, he had been quite solitary. He found himself constantly thinking of St. Paul, and entering into that apostle's most ardent thoughts and most lofty conceptions. He was not sure, but it at length occurred to him that his influence among the tribe was even less than it had been formerly. The children still came to him, but the men would walk carelessly away when he spoke. But not one whit of his exertions did he relax in consequence. And then this happened to him—his mind outran his body. Instead of sleeping at night, he found himself, except at short and uncertain intervals, plunging into theories which he had learned in former years. With all the glorious stars of the southern hemisphere above his head, he would regard them, and lose himself in speculations as to the reality of the many vision-

any ideas which from time to time had been put forward by scientific men. Then, when the moon rose in all her splendor, he would look at her, and apostrophize the theory of her deadness, and that of many of the starry host, as horrible. It seemed to him something awful that these dead worlds should be whirling through space, their light and glow and beauty unchangeable. He did not believe in the truth of it. And then he would find himself repeating snatches of Greek plays, and portions of the verse of the Latin poets. His accumulated stores of knowledge, much of which he had completely forgotten, had all returned to him; he wondered to think of what he had once known.

His brain refused him any rest. He *compelled* himself to concentrate his attention in the daytime on what he was doing, giant effort as it was; but, towards evening, the very greatness of his mental powers produced a corresponding loss of bodily strength to control them. "If my brain would only rest," he said sometimes; "if only for three or four hours."

But this it would not do; his thoughts ran riot. Now he was with Ethel, in imagination; and, forgetting his bitterness against her, was looking in her sweet face, and repeating that ardent poetry she had so loved. He found himself saying aloud one night,

"O love, love, love! oh, withering might!"

and then he had checked himself with a half-laugh, in which there was no mirth. But for the peace of God, which still possessed him, and the earnest desire to do his duty, he felt he could not have borne his life.

He found himself dealing with the generalities of all the sciences, and—with those with which he was most intimately acquainted—going into the subtler niceties and more profound depths. The geological theories of the present day, the geographical discoveries, the marvellous researches of chemistry—on all of which subjects he had read deeply—were to him now sources of actual distress. He could not dismiss their particulars from his mind. He had formerly given much time to metaphysics, and now all the problems of the Aristotelian treatises would not be forgotten. He worked them out ceaselessly; they gave him no peace. He recalled the lives of eminent men—of philosophers, poets, painters, musicians; he found that he could remember each detail that he had read concerning them. The ancient histories of the world, the modern histories, all came back to him with bewildering distinctness. As he lay he would sometimes fancy he could hear the tramp of the armed hosts in the battles of the ancients. And then, at break of day, he would plunge his head into the stream, and return, to some degree refreshed, only, as the day wore on, to find himself again under the influence of his too active mind. He asked himself sometimes if his brain were diseased, but decided that it was not.

So passed the days and weeks, his spirit strong and brave as ever not to succumb, but his health gradually failing. He wandered some little distance away one evening. He was absent some hours, and when

he returned he found smoke and charred timber and ruin: the blacks had burned his huts and had departed. And this was the result of his mission work! But even then his courage did not fail him; he looked up, and said, "It is permitted by God;" and, lying down on the ground, slept—for the first time for many a long week—some hours of dreamless, unbroken sleep.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

UNBELIEF.

To remain in the bush under such circumstances would not only be absurd, it would be manifestly wrong. Therefore Mr. Manley determined to seek the nearest station without delay; it was thirty miles distant, but he could walk that, he thought, by taking rest constantly. He had a small supply of food—such food, alas!—and he could carry sufficient water slung in a large flask on his back. His Bible he always carried in his pocket. With this, and this alone, he departed.

He felt no regret as he turned his back on what had been his home for so many months; he felt *nothing*. His period of mental suffering had been too greatly prolonged; he could feel pain no longer. At this moment he doubted if *any* bad news would have affected him in the smallest degree.

He journeyed but slowly; the ground was rough and uneven, the heat very great. He passed among groves of eucalypti and she-oaks, their sombre green foliage giving little shelter. At night he heard the shrill cry of a night-bird or two, otherwise there was profound stillness. He made sure he knew the right track, but when two days had passed, and he saw no sign of the station, he began to fear that he had missed his way.

During all this time his brain had become still less under his control, his physical weakness was becoming so great. The profound solitude removed all need for restraint, and he would burst forth into the solemn strains of Milton, or quote some of the fearful passages of Dante, without knowing why he did so. He would repeat long passages from the Epistles, and once chanted aloud an entire chapter of the Song of Solomon. Yet, with it all, his mind was, in one way, as clear as it had ever been; he appreciated to the full his own situation, and spoke to himself of his own danger.

But when the third day was ended he lay down, and his heart for the first time failed him. He drank his last drop of water, and closed his eyes, exclaiming, with Elijah, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life." But even as he said the words, they savored to him of cowardice. He arose, and taking out his Bible, began to read by the light of the moon. It opened at Ezekiel, and this was the verse that attracted his attention: "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of the heavens strove upon the

great sea." His mind seemed to dwell on this; he closed his Bible and lay down again. The stars looked from their heights, and, as he contemplated them, he found himself again with his mind on astronomical theories. Could it be possible, he asked himself, if each tiny speck in remotest distances were itself a solar system of vast extent, that the Creator of such vast and illimitable space could look down on such a human being as himself? The faith in an actual personal presence of God had ever been his firmest belief; during his worst troubles this had never left him; in everything he had recognized the finger of God. But now a worse trouble befell him, for *that* consolation was no longer present. The majesty of the solar systems so oppressed him that his faith was well-nigh gone. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; I cannot attain unto it," he said, in the bitterness of his heart. But the thought was agony to him. He knelt on the ground, and stretched out his hands in despair, exclaiming, with Max Piccolomini,

"Oh, that an angel would descend from heaven,
And scoop for me the right, the uncorrupted,
With a pure hand from the pure font of light.'"

He thought of his own life, and wondered if that were an entire failure; whether his whole labor had not been thrown away. He thought of the agony endured, not by Christians only, but by people of all sects, of all nations—the hopeless agony oftentimes. He began to marvel how men could believe that one little portion of the great family of mankind could only be right; to question whether, if there were a Father at all, he was not equally Father to *all*; and then he remembered the prayers sometimes used in time of war—prayers that we might, in effect, mow down our fellow-creatures, equally children of the universal family—and he wondered that men could pray them.

He thought of Jews, Mohammedans, Brahmins, Christians, all pressing forward in their efforts to worship the one God, blindly, it may be, but still earnestly; and he wondered if that God knew it. He *could* not believe that we alone, of all sections, would, in the long, far-off future, be the only saved; he *could* not but hope that some way might yet be found for all.

And then the theory of the gradual absorption of the sea into the centre of the earth, and the gradual but slow and sure death of the world itself, came over him; and he asked himself, For what purpose was it made?

He who had comforted the sorrowful, had given assurance to the doubting, had ministered to the sick, and been as the right hand of all in whose path he was thrown, was now sick and sorrowful and doubting himself, but there was none to uphold him. Still kneeling, he held up his arms, and said,

"I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs,
That slope through darkness up to God,

“ ‘I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call,
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.’ ”

The stars still shone in all their glory, and again he lay back beneath a eucalyptus, and looked at them. And then a lower depth opened to him, and the still more awful thought came into his mind, “Is there a God?” It was torture to him; he wrestled with it, he threw himself on his face, and clutched the very ground in his hands in his agony at this idea. But put it from him he could not. The past happiness he had always enjoyed, the evidences of prophecy, of faith, of his own soul—all went by him, as though they had never been. They *had* been, he knew; but grasp them he could not; to him now they were meaningless words.

Wave after wave of unbelief swept over him. Every difficulty he had ever felt in Old Testament narrative, every doubt of any kind whatever, all came to him now, and swallowed him up. He asked himself whether there were a God, or heaven, or future life; or whether the atheists were right, and he, and such as he, were of all men most miserable.

Forgetting how in the former times he had so earnestly counselled others not to expect that any special miracle would be wrought in their case, he cried aloud, “If there be a God, manifest thyself.” But there was neither voice nor answer, and the same awful silence reigned. And then his physical system would bear nothing further; he lay down again, motionless, to die, with the awful thought deep down in his heart, “There is no God!” He began to fancy he was dead already. A voice in his mind, not his own, seemed repeating,

“O me! why have they not buried me deep enough?
Is it kind to have made me a grave so rough—
Me, that was never a quiet sleeper?
Maybe still I am but half-dead,
Then I cannot be wholly dumb.
I will cry to the steps above my head,
And somebody, surely some kind heart will come
To bury me, bury me
Deeper, ever so little deeper.”

Then he lay in a trance, and this was the vision he beheld as he lay.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HIS VISION.

HE seemed to stand on the sea-shore—a wild, barren, and desolate shore; the clouds hung black and low; the sun was blood-red and misty; the wind moaned and sighed; the waves, dull and leaden-colored, broke heavily on the strand. Suddenly up rushed the north wind, howling and raving; snow fell in showers; the waves increased, till they lashed in fury on the shore. The wind took him,

and bore him out to sea, he thought, to the midst of the mighty ocean. The south wind appeared; it fought and wrestled with the north. The waves rose in huge billows; the noise was deafening. Thunder crashed and lightning shone, when up came the east and west winds. The battle of the elements had begun.

It was an awful scene of wildest chaos, and he was in the midst of it all. At one moment borne down to the lowest depths of the ocean; at another, high upraised in the sky; then whirled around by those tremendous forces. He felt no fear; he gloried in it. The sense of life, of power, of danger, of excitement, was fearful in its intensity; but he rejoiced in it, although he knew that the whole earth was shaken, and the end of all things was at hand. The tumult, the roar and rage went on—it might have been for days, it might have been for ages—when suddenly, in a moment, all was still.

The sky, no longer leaden, but brightly blue, opened above him; he was borne upwards and upwards, up and still up, to golden lights and starry firmaments. He knew that eternity had begun. But what was it? Was it that deadening, dulling sound of never-ending, never-varying singing? Oh, no, it was not that. It was something altogether marvellous, altogether beautiful. He passed through cycles of years, from one starry system to another, ever glorying in the marvels that surrounded him; never wearying of the gorgeous beauty, the unceasing development of knowledge, the explanation of all mysteries, even to that painful problem of the world—our world.

He found an answer to the great question of "Why?" Why the sorrow, the suffering, the care, the sin; he saw it all then—why permitted, why sent. Every good action, every pure thought, every kind word, lived and lived again; good triumphed, evil had vanished. Pain had gone, and with it all tears and sorrow and crying.

He thought Ethel was with him, that together they understood what mortals call the inscrutable ways, the devious counsels of the Almighty, which ever, as they advanced in knowledge, seemed vaster to their comprehension. Together they rejoiced in the loveliness, the splendors of creation; and here, as never before, soul answered soul, and he and she were no longer divided. Yet he was not always with her. In this spirit-world he met again all the true love and friendship he had ever known. The reality appeared, the dross and alloy had melted away. It no longer seemed sad that there they neither married nor were given in marriage. The love all bore to one another made them willing to share their joys; they met with rapture, they parted without pain. For over and above, and in and through all, was the light which no man can approach unto.

So time had gone, and forever and forever new pleasures, new delights, awaited them; and for everything which they had given up for conscience' sake they seemed to be recompensed through all eternity. And then a higher flight of glory seemed to be vouchsafed to him, but what he saw cannot be written in pages such as these.

All consciousness left him; he lay like a log, with the winds roar-

ing and raving above him, the thunder rolling, and the rain dashing in sheets on his face.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

GOOD SAMARITANS.

Two gentlemen were driving towards Campertown at break of day.

"What a storm we had in the night!" said one.

"I am very glad it is over; I was beginning to think the roof would have been blown in," said the other.

They had been visiting an outlying hut, and had stayed the night there.

"Look under the trees yonder," returned his friend, a Mr. Philpot; "a man is lying there, surely."

"Can't be."

"But it is," said Mr. Philpot, pulling up, and giving the reins to his friend, Mr. Groves; "stay here, while I go and see."

He returned shortly.

"By his dress he is a clergyman"—for even in the bush Mr. Manley had retained clerical costume—"and I am afraid he is dead."

Mr. Groves got out, hitched the reins round a tree, and looked attentively at the recumbent figure.

"He is not dead," he said. "What a fine face he has!" for Mr. Manley's face, though wasted, had grown beautiful in its expression of calm repose.

Mr. Philpot took out his flask, and administered a few drops of brandy. After a short interval, they forced about a teaspoonful down his throat.

"He is drenched to the skin," said Mr. Groves. "What are we to do with him?"

"Take him with us to the nearest station, and that is five miles out of our way."

"He is at death's door," said Mr. Groves, who had been a medical student formerly; "he will not get sufficient attention at Onslow's station; we had better take him with us to Campertown, and put him up at some hotel."

With some difficulty they lifted and placed him in the vehicle. Mr. Groves supported him on the journey, and from time to time administered brandy; but at Campertown these good Samaritans would not leave him at a hotel.

"I will put him up myself," said Mr. Philpot, who lived in the place, and was a wealthy man. "Go for a doctor at once, will you, Groves."

For three days Mr. Manley lay on his bed unable to move hand or foot. In unconsciousness—in merciful, profound unconsciousness—his weary brain was at rest at last. But when at length he

came to himself, he awoke with his mind clear and bright, in the fullest possession of his senses. His first words were, "I thank my God."

Then he asked how he had been saved, and when they told him, he was too weak to reply; he lay again in profound stillness, a look of peace on his face.

For a week he hovered between life and death, and then his vigor began to return to him, and he knew that he should live; but he still could not rise. Then he asked if he were in a town, and if there were a clergyman in it.

They told him there was, on which he requested that he might be sent for to administer the communion.

The doctor attending him mistook his meaning.

"You are not going to die, sir; I will stake my professional reputation that you will recover."

"I know it," returned Mr. Manley, "but it is my wish to do as I have said."

They acceded to his request, and he spent the rest of the day in silence. And then, when he could leave his bed, he found that every toilet requisite was supplied; his clothes, wayworn and soiled with travel, had been renovated; and that every accessory, in the way of slippers, handkerchiefs, and so on, was ready for him. To his kind host, and to Mr. Groves, he was profoundly grateful; but he said little in actual words.

As soon as he was able they drove him to church one Sunday morning, arriving about the time of the communion service. There were few communicants; they only filled the space of the altar-rails. Mr. Manley knelt last of them all; but when the clergyman, seeing a brother clergyman, would have administered to him first, he motioned to him to begin at the other end, receiving last of all, and saying, in his inmost heart, "I am not worthy."

The service over, he retired to his room, and was not seen again that day.

He was now without worldly goods, without money, without, as he thought, reputation; and yet he was saying, in the depths of his heart, "I thank my God."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DESPONDENCY.

MR. PHILPOT's kindness did not end by forcing Mr. Manley to accept a loan, for which he could scarcely be prevailed on to receive an acknowledgment; but on hearing that Mr. Manley wished to proceed without delay to Mr. Yorke's station, he himself volunteered to accompany him.

"You are not fit to travel at all," he said, kindly; "much less alone."

In truth, he had been more impressed than he cared to acknowledge by the clergyman's patient endurance, his courteous manner, and, above all, his earnest face and expression. He would gladly have detained him longer, but Mr. Manley was anxious to arrive at Mr. Yorke's, for he looked on him as more than a brother.

Mr. and Mrs. Yorke received him with open arms. He was still very weak, and Mr. Yorke insisted that he should for the present keep entirely to his own set of rooms, taking his meals when and how he pleased, without feeling himself bound to join the dinner-table, where often there were many guests.

But it was by no means Mr. Yorke's intention to leave his visitor in solitude. He sat with him, he read to him, and often in the night he would come to him to make sure he wanted for nothing, and, seeing him quietly sleeping, would gently depart. For Mr. Manley could sleep now; sometimes he thought he could not sleep enough. His sleep was profound, dreamless; his mind had entirely ceased its strange workings.

Then, as he grew stronger, he would by degrees join the family circle, and talk in his old pleasant fashion to their child, or enter into conversation with Mrs. Yorke, who was clever. But it went to her heart sometimes to see how sad his face was when he thought he was unobserved, to note the far-away look in his eyes.

"I wish you would get him to tell you what is troubling him, William," she said to her husband. "I am sure there is something on his mind; perhaps it is about that Ethel." For her Mrs. Yorke had not even now the commonest patience.

So one evening, when Mr. Manley was in his own sitting-room, leaning back in a very comfortable arm-chair at the open window, looking at the azaleas and other flowers in full bloom outside, Mr. Yorke stood beside him, and, placing his hand on his shoulder, said, very kindly, "Phil, dear boy, won't you tell me what the trouble is?"

Mr. Manley looked at the kind, true face of his friend, and hesitated as to whether he should tell him or not; to every other human being he knew his lips would be sealed.

"You haven't forgotten Ethel yet; is that it?" asked Yorke, revolving in his mind whether matters might not yet be patched up between them, if he still loved her.

Mr. Manley shook his head.

"It seems to me I have forgotten her; I rarely think of her." And, indeed, he thought he had in one sense forgotten her.

Yorke took a chair beside him.

"You have something on your mind, I know; I have long seen it, my wife now sees it."

"The matter of which I am now about to speak is one which you must not repeat to your wife," said Mr. Manley, with a touch of his old determination.

"I will not."

Then Mr. Manley told him the entire history of his latter days among the blacks, of his mental sufferings, of his loss of faith; and

finally, some little of the vision vouchsafed to him (for such he believed it), though never again did this narrative cross his lips.

Yorke listened in silence to the end.

"But what is the trouble now?" he asked, at length.

"Do you think it is no trouble to a man such as I am to have denied his God?" he said; and spoke further words of humility which grieved Yorke to his very soul.

He thought of the men he knew, living, many of them, happy, careless, sometimes sinful lives, and how no remorse affected them, while here was this man, who had lived the life of a martyr and a saint, bowed down to the dust with the sense of his own unworthiness.

"My dear Phil," he exclaimed, "my more than brother, you make a great mistake; you do, indeed. On your own showing you were ill and weak; your mind and body were not properly balanced. Under these circumstances, you went through certain phases of feeling, for which you are no more responsible than my child would be for the like."

Mr. Manley shook his head.

"You did not *wish* to feel as you did, you would have given all you possessed *not* to have felt it; therefore you are blameless, entirely blameless."

"How if I felt thus in consequence of some sin, even to myself scarcely acknowledged—some sin, perhaps, of former years?"

This speech cut Yorke yet more deeply, who knew how stainless his friend's life had been.

"You pain me more than I can tell you, Phil," he said, gravely; "you are not yourself. If our cases were reversed, you would be the first to tell me that I ought to comfort myself, and not attribute my feelings to any other ground than my own health. I do not profess to understand these matters generally, but I do most strongly feel that you are now wrong. Your vision may, step by step, be traced to actual causes—the thunder, the wind, the rain, the remembrance of your books, of Ethel, and so on. So also with your other feelings; they were simply morbid."

But Mr. Manley again shook his head.

"Put it on other grounds, then," continued Yorke. "Granted that it was your own fault that you couldn't always be a St. Paul—though I don't for a moment admit it was—don't you think that to be the subject of a special vision (if you *will* have it it was a vision) a man must be the very reverse of a bad man, or he would not be so honored?"

"God forbid I should ever believe *that*," said Mr. Manley, in his deep voice, and putting his white hand to his face, on which the color had now begun to return.

Yorke was in despair.

"What argument can I adduce?" he thought.

"Come, Phil," he said, cheerily, "pick up heart. I see you are better fitted to give counsel than to take it. If you don't believe me, go to your bishop, to your archbishop, if you will (you were

always such a stickler for Church authority, I know), and see if they don't tell you the same as I do."

"I admit fully the authority of my bishop," said Mr. Manley, gravely; "but he cannot judge between me and my own soul."

"And yet you advise others, and expect them to receive your counsel as authoritative."

"They are laymen, I am a priest."

"My dear old boy," returned Yorke, with a laugh, though he felt to the full the trouble of his friend, "you are becoming a regular kill-joy; cheer up, and forget your troubles. Speak to me in a year's time, and then tell me if you do not judge yourself differently. And now, good-night," and Yorke grasped his hand warmly.

Mr. Manley remained deep in thought for some time, and then it seemed to him that possibly his friend might be right. But that the vision was a vision, and nothing else, he would always believe to the end of his days.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

RETURNING HEALTH.

THE advice given by Yorke was wholesome; the seed had taken root, and was destined to bear fruit. For this man, who in former days had never read either the Athanasian Creed or the Communion Service from the moment that the Church allowed of the omission, feeling from the love he bore his people that he *could* not willingly sit in judgment on them, had, during the preceding weeks, been judging himself far more sternly than his worst enemy would have done.

From this time he was very seldom allowed to be alone. It was, "Phil, I wish you would drive my wife over to So-and-so's, I am busy and can't go." Or, "Please, Mr. Manley, come and help me to cut these flowers, the stalks hurt my fingers so;" and Mrs. Yorke would display her white hands in an injured manner, knowing full well that she could have summoned the gardener to her assistance in one minute. Or it would be, "The housekeeper would be so much pleased if Mr. Manley would look at her storerooms, and see the provisions served out to the men." Or, "The groom would be glad if Mr. Manley would choose which horses he preferred to drive."

The child too—a very pretty, engaging little girl of two years old, the delight of Yorke's heart—who had been scrupulously kept away from Mr. Manley's sitting-room, now constantly came in through the open windows, when he would at once lay aside his writing or his books, and take her on his knee and amuse her.

A messenger would constantly arrive: "The master was busy; could Mr. Manley look into such-and-such a thing for him." Once, when thus summoned to see a man who had met with an accident, and cut himself badly, Mr. Manley caught sight of Yorke's retreating form through the back of the shed. He called him. "Why did you send, as you were here yourself?"

"Oh," replied Yorke, coolly, "I always have my hands full; I really don't see why you shouldn't help me."

So, in his old fashion, Mr. Manley fell into his old custom of talking pleasantly and genially with all with whom he was brought into contact, and forgot himself in serving others. He observed that, by degrees, all the deep and learned books which Yorke had placed at first in his sitting-room were removed, and replaced by novels, comic papers, and the most trivial literature.

There was one book—a geological work, newly brought out—which, being interested in, he determined to keep, and took it into his bedroom at night. He was reading it the next morning, when Mrs. Yorke stepped in at his sitting-room window, looking as fresh as a rose, her hands full of flowers.

"Here are some lovely roses for you, Mr. Manley," she said, beginning to place them in vases on the table; "and," glancing at the book on his knees, "I am very sorry, but I want that book you are reading; I have promised it to a friend."

He smiled. "Do you think your friend would mind waiting a day or two?" he said. "I am really interested in these theories, which are something new."

"Oh, I am *sure* he would," said Mrs. Yorke, with decision. "I promised it to him yesterday; it is Mr. Greengrass, of the Wattles. I thought, perhaps, you would not mind taking me over there now to leave it."

He closed the book with reluctance, and declared himself quite ready. And during the five-mile drive there, surely so clever a woman as Mrs. Yorke talked a vast amount of nonsense, making riddles, and repeating the queer sayings of the country folk, at which Mr. Manley found himself smiling.

It was a bright, beautiful morning, the sun's heat tempered with a refreshing breeze. He said he had greatly enjoyed his drive, as they arrived at the Wattles. Mrs. Yorke alone alighted, reappearing in a minute or two, accompanied by Mrs. Greengrass.

"So much obliged to you," he heard the latter say, as she stood in the doorway.

The book lay for some months on Mr. Greengrass's table, whence it was duly returned—unopened.

A twinkle of his old humor came into Mr. Manley's eye—he having seen through the *ruse* at once—on their return drive.

"A ten-mile drive, and all your trouble, to keep me from reading that book," he said, looking her full in the face. "I am much obliged to you, Mrs. Yorke." She blushed scarlet for a moment, then laughed.

"Was the device, then, so transparent? But, Mr. Manley, when any one has been as ill as you have been he ought not, indeed, to read much."

"I am beginning to think you are right," he answered, gently. "I dare say you know what is best for me, better than I do myself."

The calls on his time were now becoming so frequent that he had but little to spare. The charm of his manner had so impressed every

one on the station that he would often be sent for quite independently of Mr. Yorke; for every man and every woman wished to have a kind word from him, and would seize on any pretence for doing so, more especially the women. It recalled to him his Newforth days, when he could not escape from the ladies, who coined pretexts for receiving a word or a smile from him, although it was not quite thus that he put it to himself. Then there were nice girls brought to stay in the house, and Mr. Manley was directed to escort them hither and thither. To them he was invariably courteous and kind, but his heart was still too sore with regard to Ethel to allow of any new attraction.

"Such a charming man," said the girls.

"What a delightful visitor!" And so on.

The conversation seemed to be very frivolous very often; one would have supposed that no one had ever heard of a poet, unless, indeed, some faint recollection of Shakespeare survived. And when Mr. Manley, on giving up sitting alone, searched the bookshelves for something worth reading, he found little but what he emphasized as trash, quite ignorant that Yorke had spent an entire morning in rearranging his large stock of books, and had caused boxfuls to be put away.

One day he asked him if he would hold a service on Sunday in the large hall outside.

"Certainly," said Mr. Manley, much gratified; "and am I to preach?"

"Well, no, Phil," said Yorke, with a laugh; "we don't care about sermons in this part of the world."

Mrs. Yorke was on the point of responding, warmly, that *every one* would care about Mr. Manley's sermons; a warning look from her husband checked her. Mr. Manley felt glad he was not called on to preach; he knew himself that his mind required rest yet.

But when the service was held, Yorke, who never could or would be induced to rise in church on the clergyman's entrance, stood up when Mr. Manley appeared, and remained standing for some minutes, and with him the entire congregation. After this, he was requested to read prayers every day, a shortened form, and the same mark of respect was invariably paid him.

As yet he had held to his teetotal principles, and had observed with satisfaction that all the men employed on the station drank nothing but tea. But, though his color and strength had returned, Mr. Yorke was not yet satisfied about his friend. He accosted him abruptly one day.

"If I asked you to do me a favor, would you do it?"

"Of course I would," replied Mr. Manley, cheerfully.

"I want you to take some medicine."

"Oh," returned the other, "that really is a stretch of friendship on your part; I have no faith in drugs."

"Here it is," said Yorke, laughing, and producing a bottle of port wine, on which Mrs. Yorke had placed a label, with MEDICINE written in large letters.

"And you are to take two large glasses a day. Keep it in here, and no one will be the wiser. I suggest this, or else I know I shall be told about example, and all that. You really want it, Phil; be guided by me."

"I will be guided by you," said the clergyman, who was no ascetic for asceticism's sake; "I will certainly take it."

The bottle, when finished, was replaced by another and another, on all of which Mrs. Yorke placed the same label; and then Mr. Manley declared that he was now thoroughly well, and would take no more. Neither did his friends think it necessary to urge him.

He was playing with the little girl one day on the lawn, throwing her a ball. As Yorke was advancing, it fell on his head. The child laughed, and Mr. Manley gave a cheery, hearty laugh, which gladdened his friend's heart. He placed his hand on his shoulder.

"The Vicar of old times has come back, Phil," he exclaimed, kindly. "I was beginning to be afraid at one time that we had got hold of a St. Simeon Stylites; and now, old fellow, you may preach, or read, or do anything you please; I wash my hands of you."

It was true; the Vicar had returned, the visionary had departed. His remorse had gone, and, save for a great regret, which he thought would keep him humble to the end of his days, prevent his ever feeling pride respecting himself, and cause him more deeply to sympathize with the erring, there were no evil traces left behind of the night on which he had lain down to die.

Then one day, on the arrival of the English mail, came a bundle, a sheaf, a package of letters from Newforth, addressed to Mr. Manley, to be forwarded to him by Mr. Yorke without delay; they were most important.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MRS. CARTER.

IN the spring of the year succeeding that in which Mr. Manley had left Newforth there came a lady to stay at one of the principal hotels—a lady dressed very handsomely, but in widow's deepest mourning. She arrived late one afternoon; her luggage bore foreign labels. As her dinner was being served, she talked to the landlord, who himself waited in the room.

Her interest seemed to centre principally in the church, about which she asked many questions. It was a pity the spire was not yet completed, she said; for somehow the work had lagged greatly of late; subscriptions no longer came in, and Mr. Rowen's mild appeals were disregarded.

"A fortnight's work would finish it," said the landlord. "Ah, ma'am, we want Mr. Manley back again."

"I heard he had gone," said the lady, "but I did not know why. What made him leave?"

"He left, ma'am, because he was under a bit of a cloud."

"What cloud?"

The landlord hesitated.

"I am particularly interested in news of him," said the lady. "I beg you will tell me all you can."

He then entered into the fullest particulars of the late Vicar's troubles, the story losing nothing in the telling. The lady's face assumed an expression of the deepest concern.

"And I never to have been told of this!" she said. "I am deeply grieved."

Thus encouraged, the landlord enlarged on the tale still further.

"And I will say this, ma'am," he continued, "that he was as pleasant a gentleman to speak to as ever lived, and had a kind word for every one."

"And what is your opinion? Do *you* think he did wrong?" she asked, suddenly.

"Well, you see, ma'am, I don't think he meant harm; and if that designing hussy at Fisherman's Cove hadn't got hold of him he might have been here now."

The lady turned away, and looked out of the window.

"Can you give me the address of the two church-wardens?" she asked, after a time.

"Certainly, ma'am. Mr. Leslie lives at Knollside now; he lost a deal of money by the failure of a bank, caused by that swindler of a fellow, the manager, Carter"—a shade of pain crossed the lady's face—"and had to move into a small house. Admiral Hatton is the other; he lives at a place called The Elms."

"Did they remain friendly to him?" she asked.

"Mr. Leslie stuck to him through thick and thin, Admiral Hatton quarrelled outright. You see, his daughter was engaged to Mr. Manley, and the Admiral didn't like the goings-on at the Cove."

"Was the engagement broken off for this reason?" she asked, in a constrained voice.

"Oh, yes, ma'am; entirely so. He was rare fond of her, 'tis said; but she wouldn't have anything more to say to him."

"You say the mayor was one of the most prominent persons at these meetings?"

"Yes."

"And where does he live?"

The landlord told her; she noted down the address, and went to her room to put on her bonnet.

She called first on the Vicar, but he was out. She next went to Mr. Leslie's. On the road young Mr. Allen met her, looking at her with undisguised curiosity. She pulled her veil over her face, and walked on, coloring perceptibly. Mr. Leslie was at home.

"I have come, sir," she said, in a very sweet voice, the tone of which, he thought, was familiar to him, "to ask you to see that a great wrong shall be righted. I am sure you will do so, for I **have** heard of your good-will towards Mr. Manley."

Mr. Leslie's face lit up with pleasure.

"Is it about him?" he asked. "I assure you, madam, that nothing in life would give me greater pleasure than to see him righted."

"I have been told," said the lady, somewhat nervously, "that a great scandal arose concerning his visits to Fisherman's Cove. He came to see *me*—me and my husband."

"*You?*" repeated Mr. Leslie, in surprise. "I understood he visited some working woman."

She colored.

"We had reasons for representing working people—very painful reasons. I am Mr. Manley's sister."

He crossed over and shook hands with her.

"My dear madam, I am rejoiced; I am overjoyed. I always knew it was all right, and now I will make it known without delay all over Newforth. But why did he conceal the fact?"

"My husband had put himself within reach of the law," she said, in a low voice, "and I asked my brother to help us to get away to the coast of France quietly. He did so. My husband was very ill at the time; he is now dead. I do not wish to speak evil of the dead and of my husband; but it is necessary that the facts should be known, in order that my brother, who has suffered so unjustly, may be cleared. I will take care that, as soon as he hears I have been to you, he shall send you an account of the whole story in writing; but at present—my loss is so recent, and I loved my husband—perhaps you will kindly spare me."

Mr. Leslie felt much touched.

"We require no details from you, madam, whatever; the one fact is sufficient. Your face alone guarantees that; you are wonderfully like him."

"I am considered so."

"But how was it he never mentioned you? We never knew he had a sister."

"We had not met since the time of my marriage; he—he disapproved of my marriage, and would not visit my husband, until this trouble befell us, and then he came at once."

"I can't now understand it," returned Mr. Leslie. "Why could he not have told us in confidence?"

"He had promised us faithfully that he would not tell *any one*; we—my husband—had been so nearly captured so many times. We knew that he had not six months to live, and my brother, after a great deal of entreaty from me, consented that we should come down here, he thinking that in so quiet a spot as the Cove, where he had so constantly visited without remark, we should entirely escape notice. It was ordained otherwise. Had you all known I was his sister, the police would have known it too; it was only the want of knowledge that I had relations which prevented their tracking us. And though all this trouble has befallen my brother entirely through us, his reputation taken from him, his church gone, his engagement broken off, yet, Mr. Leslie, would you believe that, beyond stating the bare facts that his engagement was broken off, and that he had resigned his liv-

ing, he never told me one word of his troubles in the two letters I received from him."

"And where is he now?"

"Alas! I do not know. When last I heard of him he was in the heart of the bush."

"He never writes here," said Mr. Leslie; "but I don't wonder at that. Will you not tell me your name?"

She colored again.

"I am known by the name of Mrs. Reginald, but—but it is not my real name. If necessary, I will tell it you."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Leslie, heartily; "it is no business of ours. Also," he added, after a pause, "I do not see why I need tell any one that Reginald is not your real name, if you would rather I did not."

"You are very kind, very kind indeed; I should greatly prefer it."

"I will make the fact known that you are Mr. Manley's sister all over the place to-day, without an hour's delay. I am rejoiced, Mrs. Reginald, rejoiced."

Then an idea seemed to strike Mrs. Reginald. She looked up tremulously. When she looked grave she was wonderfully like her brother; but her face did not lighten as did his when he smiled. The likeness brought all Mr. Leslie's warm friendship to his remembrance; he longed to clasp the former Vicar's hand.

"Mr. Leslie," the lady said, with some agitation, "I cannot accept, on my brother's part, your kindness without telling you whom you are helping. But, before doing so, I would beseech your forbearance."

"I am quite in the dark as to what you mean, Mrs. Reginald," he replied; "but any service I could render him would be but part payment of the great debt of gratitude I owe him for all he has done for me—has made me, I may say."

"It seems to me," said Mrs. Reginald, in so low a tone that he could barely catch the words, "that I and mine have wrought nothing but ill. Every worldly prospect of my brother's, my husband and I have destroyed; while as for you, and many others in your position, oh, Mr. Leslie, forgive us, forgive my husband—my husband, who is dead!"

As she spoke she raised her hands beseechingly. He began to wonder if she were mad.

"What am I to forgive?" he asked, in wonder.

"You have lost a great deal of money, have you not, through Farmer's bank failing?"

"I have," returned Mr. Leslie, hotly, "and all through that double-dyed scoundrel and villain, Carter. If I could only catch the rascal!"—for the memory of his wrongs was almost too much for Mr. Leslie at times.

"He is beyond your reach," she said, with a tone of agony in her voice; "he—he was my husband."

Mr. Leslie turned sharply round, and walked to the window. He stood there, with his back turned to the room, his mind full of the

strongest indignation. So he, who had been the one man in the place who had stood by the Vicar, had helped him in every possible way, had been the one man who had been injured, and deeply injured, by that Vicar's nearest relations.

At first he felt anger against Mr. Manley. What right had he to secure his help under false pretences? Ought he not at least to have told *him* the circumstances, if him alone? And then he thought he heard the Vicar's sad voice saying, as on the day he met him, "I have given my word that I will not say anything." No, he did wrong to be angry with him; any day his word had been as good as his bond. But as for this scoundrel Carter—for him he had no forgiveness, nor, he thought, was it possible that he ever should have. And he, of all people, to be called on by this man's wife to right the wrong caused by this man's crimes. No! he would not do it. He stood thus some ten minutes, lost in angry thought.

"Mr. Leslie," said Mrs. Carter, in a quiet voice.

He turned and faced her.

"It is too much to think you can forgive me and mine, I know you cannot. I think I will go to Admiral Hatton, and ask him to state the true facts about my brother; it is hopeless to expect it now from you. I did not intend to tell you so much as I have done, but I felt I could not receive your kindness under false pretences."

"No, no," returned Mr. Leslie, hastily, "don't go yet. Sit down again. I don't want you to have to tell your painful story again to Admiral Hatton. You must give me time to think."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Carter, "we have wronged him too, and his daughter, in being unconsciously the cause of the engagement with my brother being broken. It seems to me we have wronged *every one*."

Her handsome dress struck Mr. Leslie's eye; his anger returned in full force.

"So," he said to himself, "I suppose they have been living on the fat of the land in a foreign country, on the money defrauded from the widows and orphans, and me, while I could barely afford to give a beggarly two guineas to the spire fund"—which fund he had deeply at heart.

"And did you spend all the money he took?" he asked, sharply.

"Oh, no," she replied, earnestly; "you must not indeed wrong me so much. We were very poor indeed, living entirely on my brother's money."

"But what did—your husband"—he was on the point of saying "that villain"—"what did your husband do with it?"

"I cannot tell you. I know no more than you do. He was in league with a stockbroker, I know, who took the lion's share of the spoil, and squandered thousands. My—my husband constantly appropriated more deeds and bonds out of sheer dread lest his former defalcations should be discovered; this man made him do it. *He*, I believe, is still a respectable member of society"—she said this with much bitterness—"but, at the same time, a very large parcel of bonds and deeds, covering sums of enormous value, has entirely disappeared.

My husband had it with him when he left London; but he was then ill, and at times quite oblivious of his actions. Many and many a time did he try to recall where he had placed it, but without avail. He remembered having deposited it in some hiding-place—some safe hiding-place, but where, no effort of will could recall to his mind. Would that I *could* find it! I would restore it instantly."

Mr. Leslie involuntarily glanced at her handsome dress.

"You are looking at what I wear," she said, simply; "it was all given me by my aunt, with whom I am now living. I have not a shilling in the world but what she allows me. She has paid my expenses for coming to this place. I came, because I wished to ascertain if there were any news of my brother; but I should have come as soon as my husband was buried, if I could only have known the great wrong that had been done."

Her words recalled to Mr. Leslie the Vicar's great troubles, which he had forgotten in his own. He remembered all his goodness, his kindness, his real and unostentatious and heartfelt religion, his example, so much more powerful than any precept.

His face cleared, he spoke gently.

"I am very sorry for you, Mrs. Carter—very sorry, indeed. And as I have always had the most hearty and genuine regard and admiration for your brother, I will now do my utmost to right him, as far as may be possible. You need not go to any one else; rest assured that I will do as much as any man."

"I am sure of it," she replied, gratefully; "you are a good man, Mr. Leslie."

"No, I am not a good man," he replied, bluntly. "A good man would forgive your husband, and that I can't and won't do."

She threw herself on her knees before him, her hands upraised, her face, beautiful in its emotion, quivering.

"I think you would forgive him, Mr. Leslie, if you knew all. He was never a good man—never a good man, think of that! *You* live respected and honored; you have your wife, your children, your home, and, above all, your religion. He had none. I *knew* he was a bad man, but I loved him, Mr. Leslie; I loved him better than my own life. He had no safeguard; when temptation assailed him, he fell. And fierce temptations assailed him. I say, without hesitation, that a man engaged in stockbroking transactions, and what is called city life, is in mortal danger to his soul when he has no religion to uphold him. Men do pass through the ordeal untainted, but it is so as by fire, only those whose sense of honor is great. And, after all, how great the struggle!"

Mr. Leslie placed her in a chair; the tears were streaming down her cheeks. He wished himself anywhere but in his present position.

"Why do you tell me this?" he said, kindly; "you are only distressing yourself."

"Because I want you to forgive him," she said, earnestly; "and because I think that if you do, others may. I want *your* pardon, in earnest of the pardon of others."

Mr. Leslie again turned towards the window, saying, "I don't think I can forgive him; I don't feel like it."

"Must I tell you even more?" she cried, appealingly; "must I say that even when he died I tried to hope, but—but, alas! it was only hope that I had. Oh, Mr. Leslie, if I were a clergyman, I would tell people from morning till night that how they *died* was of very little consequence; it was how they *lived*. To imagine that at such a time any one has room in his mind for much more than his present feelings has always seemed to me sheer folly."

"Did not the Vicar talk to your husband?" asked Mr. Leslie, his back still turned.

"He did all that a good man could do. He came day after day and night after night to him, to endeavor to rouse in him some feeling. I think—I know—he in some measure succeeded. But, as I said before, when you are ill and weak what can you think of but your bodily ailments? It is when you are *well* that you must think."

"How did he die?" asked Mr. Leslie, with some feeling.

"Very quietly. He died of consumption—rapid consumption. We knew he could not live long. Do you then blame my brother for saving him from a felon's dock and a felon's death, and me from a worse—if worse be possible—recollection than I have already? My heart would have broken when I saw him standing to be judged, and my brother knew it. He is always so merciful in his judgment of others, and he spoke to my husband words that I shall never forget. Mr. Leslie, will you forgive your wrongs? I think you will, when you call to mind what was the end of him who committed them. He died an outcast—a man so disgraced that his widow dares not even take his name, and to support her in her grief for him has only—hope!"

Her voice failed her, she covered her face with her hands.

And then Mr. Leslie thought of Mr. Manley, and the wrongs that *he* had forgiven the dead man—forgiven them so completely that he had not even spoken of them to his sister. He had supported them in their poverty; but he had done far more—he had spoken words of gentleness and goodness and love, had shown by his life what he believed. This was indeed forgiveness. These visits to the Cove, about which so much mischief had been made, had then not only been to the wife, for the purpose of arranging their transportation to France—of itself a difficult and dangerous task under the circumstances—but they had been to the sinful, crime-stained husband, to try to bring him to a knowledge of better things. And *this* was the man whom Newforth had sent away—this man, who had shown himself more than a hero, and throughout all his trouble had comported himself more than bravely.

And then Mr. Leslie felt ashamed when he thought of himself, and the difference between his lot and Mr. Manley's. He had lost money, it was true; but what appreciable comfort? While here was this man, under a blazing Australian sun, toiling among savages, probably without a murmur. He felt a strange huskiness in his

throat as he turned to Mrs. Carter, and said, gravely, "I forgive him from my heart, and may the Lord have mercy on his soul!"

CHAPTER XL.

MR. MANLEY'S SISTER.

It was true, as Mrs. Carter had stated, that, in permitting their residence in Fisherman's Cove, the Vicar had thought that two poor-looking people would be unobserved, and might, without much difficulty, be got over to one of the quiet French villages, where Mr. Carter might die unknown and unnoticed.

The facts had been these: During Mr. Manley's residence at Cambridge Mr. Carter had been a fellow-student of his. He had known him well at one time, as had Mr. Yorke, and had permitted him to make acquaintance with his family, his sister being then a child. But, as time went on, Mr. Manley had refused to recognize him even as an acquaintance, for many circumstances had come to his knowledge through being a clergyman which were unknown to the world at large. He knew for a fact that he had appropriated his sister's trust-money, had kept back bonds, had swindled in every way which would just keep him without the law, as concerned strangers. With regard to his transactions with his own relations he could have been arrested over and over again, but he knew his relations would not prosecute, and he lived to all appearance a happy life, making friends in every direction, and betraying them on every convenient opportunity.

During a visit at a country-house he met Miss Manley, who was staying there also, and completely won her heart. He possessed a singularly attractive manner, which, combined with a handsome face, gained him much admiration from all the young ladies in the house; and Miss Manley felt very proud of her conquest when he proposed to her.

Her father had been dead for many years, her mother had died lately. But, on writing to her brother to inform him of her engagement, she was greatly surprised and displeased at being told that, though he had no legal authority over her, yet, as her nearest relation, he absolutely refused his consent. But he was not content with writing. He went to her, and in the kindest, gentlest manner, urged her to sacrifice her love to her principle. He told her of Mr. Carter's character; he warned her that she would never be happy with him. But it was of no use. She was desperately in love with him, and had quite made up her mind to marry him, saying she did not believe any of the stories she had been told against him.

Finding argument and entreaty of no use, Mr. Manley took his resolution. He told his sister that he would not visit on friendly terms with a man whom he knew to be both a swindler and a liar, and that, as husband and wife cannot be separated by their rela-

tions, his sister must choose between him and Mr. Carter. She did so, and chose the latter; whereupon Mr. Manley held no communication with them whatever until soon after he came to Newforth, when he received an imploring letter from his sister, telling him they were in great trouble; would he go to London without delay, and meet her at the Charing Cross Hotel?

It was quite enough for Mr. Manley to know that any one was in trouble; he went up to town without delay. In the course of an affecting meeting with his sister, she told him that, in some manner unknown to her, her husband had abstracted one thousand pounds from the bank, and if it were not replaced at once he would lose his responsible position.

The Vicar had replied that it was quite out of *his* power to pay a thousand pounds, neither did he feel at all inclined to compound a felony. But his sister's distress so worked on him—for he was greatly attached to her—that finally he promised he would raise all the money in his power to help. This was the reason of his severe economy at the time when he discharged one of his servants; but he asked himself many a time whether he were right in paying Mr. Carter's defalcations. He little dreamed that thousands upon thousands had been already stolen from the bank, and that this money—this hardly-obtained money—was to go only to Mr. Carter's friend the stockbroker, who had threatened to expose him if the funds were not forthcoming.

For a time after this the Vicar had lived in tranquillity—which tranquillity had been rudely disturbed on the failure of the bank, and the consequent revelations. At first Mr. Manley had declared that he would do nothing; but his sister's great distress, and the knowledge that Carter could not live long, had decided him to help them.

What danger they were in he knew, and it was not until they had gone through many and many a narrow escape of detection that they came down to Fisherman's Cove.

Mr. Manley had at first thought that he was not justified in marrying Ethel without acquainting her of the fact of his relationship to a swindler. But his sister had urged that Mr. Carter was no relation of his, and that, having cut off the connection years ago, he was by no means bound to resume it now; which view Mr. Manley, after a time, adopted. It was then that the scandal had arisen, no word of which had he mentioned to his sister, knowing how greatly it would add to her distress.

He had indeed been merciful. He had known that although Mrs. Carter had retained her love for her husband, he had treated her anything but well during their married life—had been cold and careless and indifferent. But seeing how greatly he stood in need of forgiveness on *all* points, the Vicar had resolved to forgive him all, and after a struggle—a somewhat severe struggle—had done so most completely.

In every way he had tried to awaken his seared conscience; he had talked to, he had prayed with him. And the man who, when

reading to a small week-day congregation, would substitute the word "condemnation" for that other stronger-sounding though self-meaning word (as found in the New Version), lest he should offend a brother or sister who was weak, did not now presume to say that mercy was not to be found even for Mr. Carter, and had bidden his sister—hope.

CHAPTER XLI.

MR. LESLIE'S CHARACTER.

THE news received by Mr. Leslie had greatly astonished him; for some time after Mrs. Carter had gone away (and here it may be mentioned that she left Newforth that very night) he remained pondering over what he had heard.

Now, Mr. Leslie was a man who greatly sympathized with what is termed "Muscular Christianity," and found it much easier to do a kind action than to go to church often, and perpetually repeat prayers.

"I must be the wrong sort of fellow," he had been heard to say; "but I couldn't go on at it in church, as parsons do, to save my life."

On this occasion, having been much moved, he was of opinion that his forgiveness should not be merely of a negative order; but would be best shown by suppressing the whole of the painful facts that Mrs. Carter had told him from every one except his wife, she being one of the few women whom he knew could keep a secret; and that, in order to put Mr. Manley right in the eyes of the world, it was only necessary to say that a Mr. and Mrs. Reginald were staying in Fisherman's Cove, and that Mrs. Reginald had been the Vicar's sister, which fact he had solemnly promised not to reveal, Mr. Reginald being under a cloud at the time, having put himself within reach of the law. He knew also that Mr. Manley would far rather that his relationship with so notorious a swindler as Mr. Carter should not be known, for the late Vicar was not a man without pride of birth. He came of a good stock, and was pleased that he could trace his descent in an unbroken line to the year 1113, almost all his ancestors having belonged either to the old nobility or landed gentry.

Whether they came over with the Conqueror or not he did not know, and certainly did not care; the idea that *every* one could have ancestors who did so being a little too much for his credulity. He had been heard to state with great satisfaction that when, on one occasion, an offshoot of the Manley family fell so low as actually to be obliged to enter the workhouse, the name was so much respected in the county that they allowed him to wear his own clothes, and did not compel him to put on workhouse dress.

At nine Mrs. Leslie, who had been visiting Mrs. Hatton, came in.

"You seem very thoughtful to-night, Frank," she said, observing her husband's grave countenance.

Now Mr. and Mrs. Leslie were a most attached couple, and throughout their married life had never had a quarrel, which state of affairs few married people can boast of. They might have claimed Dunmow flitches of bacon without end, Mr. Leslie was wont to say.

Mrs. Leslie had begun her married life with a most sincere affection for her husband, but without any ideas of ecstatic bliss. Starting with the theory that every man had certain peculiarities, she had resolved that, whatever her husband's might be, she would conform to them. She said to him one day, "Men are such eccentric beings that I discovered long ago that the only way to understand them is to confess that you *don't* understand them; you are then prepared for any little vagaries on their part, and can condone a great deal." She did so, and Mr. Leslie, who was not always an easy man to deal with, believed that there was not such another woman in the world. With the exception of displaying an overplus of china when they had lived in their large house, he thought everything right that she did. Since their marriage he had never once found fault with her.

She said sometimes, "Frank is the last person to whom I would go if I wanted an opinion, for he believes in me altogether too much. I cannot do wrong in his eyes;" and though she would at times gladly have consulted her husband, this very knowledge prevented her from attaching much weight to his counsel in connection with her. As a rule, if anything troubled her, she kept it to herself, knowing that it would cause him distress, and in most cases quite unnecessary distress.

For herself, she had certainly been under the impression that a man so greatly in love as Mr. Leslie had been (and so continuously attached to her afterwards) would have confided some of his thoughts to her, as well as his outward actions. But it was not so. Living in the utmost affection and harmony, they yet never spoke to one another of their deeper thoughts. He felt sure that she was—as he put it—on the right side, and she hoped and thought that he was; but open mention of any except surface ideas there was none.

On this occasion Mr. Leslie did not say a word about Mrs. Carter's request that he would forgive her husband, or that he had promised to do so. He told her the main facts of the story, and urged upon her that she should keep it as secret as he intended to do.

"And what are you going to do now about Mr. Manley?" she asked, her eyes sparkling—"Mr. Manley, who has been so shamefully treated."

"That I must take time to think about," he replied, "but, depend upon it, I will not leave a stone unturned."

CHAPTER XLII.

REPARATION.

"HARRY," exclaimed Miss Hatton, running to meet Captain Worsley, in great excitement—"Harry! what *do* you think?"

"I think," responded the young man, good-temperedly, "that it is a fine day, and that you are looking very jolly, and that I have come to spend the day with you; but I don't know that I think much else besides, except that I am awfully glad to see you."

Miss Hatton paid little attention to this speech.

"It's about the Vicar, Harry—our late Vicar, Mr. Manley—who was the best and the nicest and the most charming man that ever lived, and the worst treated by the wretched people of Newforth."

The young man laughed.

"You shouldn't put on too many superlatives, Gertrude, don't you know? They will stultify one another. Now, be a little more explicit, and tell me what this angelic being has been and gone and done and suffered."

"You may well say, 'been and done and suffered,'" returned Miss Hatton, "and most nobly suffered. But as it is a fact that he has also 'been *and gone*,' I don't see what retribution can be made, or how he can be compensated in any way for all he has gone through. We can't ask Mr. Rowen to go away."

She entered then into a lengthy account of the whole affair, by no means sparing her sister in her recital.

"To think," she continued, indignantly, "that his face alone could not have convinced Ethel of his truth. Why, his expression spoke for itself!"

"Were you in love with him, my dear?" asked Captain Worsley, with a smile.

"Well, you see, Harry," she replied, laughing, "I hadn't the chance, because, from the time he first came, he showed so openly that he preferred Ethel. But," she added, mischievously, "there is no saying what I *might* have done had he asked me to marry him, because, as I have often said, he is the sort of man that *any* girl might like."

"Now you're trying to make me savage," said Captain Worsley, with good-temper; "but go on as much as you like, my dear. I'm not one of your fire-eating fellows, who thinks that because he likes a girl she ought to live in a glass case, and not so much as know there is another man in the world. I'm not jealous."

"That's right, Harry," said Miss Hatton, warmly. "Of course

you're not, and have no cause to be. But I can't help being a little excited about this news."

And some further conversation ensued about the late Vicar.

"If I wrote a dictionary," she said, at length, "I should put an entirely new meaning to the word 'Vicar.'"

"And what might that be?"

"It would run thus: 'VICAR—a word signifying a man who helps every one, and serves every one, and is good to every one, and, in some cases, is put upon and imposed upon by every one.'"

Captain Worsley laughed.

"That's quite wrong, Gertrude," he said. "Listen to my definition: 'VICAR—a man who has a precious easy time of it; who is flattered and praised and run after by ladies, and invited out and pampered and coddled—all because his surplice is becoming, and he has the power of making sweet speeches.'"

"Harry! you are a perfect wretch; you *know* it isn't true. What about your father?" for Captain Worsley's father had been a clergyman.

"My father," said Captain Worsley—"my father was the jolliest old boy going, and, if he had been a young man, would have proved the truth of my words. *He* had a precious easy life, I'm sure. Read two services a day on Sunday, and shut up his church during the remainder of the week, when he was going out to dinners and luncheons."

"I suppose he had to preach."

Captain Worsley laughed.

"Oh, yes, he preached two sermons a week; and it's a most remarkable thing that they bore a wonderful resemblance to a book of sermons extending over three years, that we had in the house, proving, without a doubt, that great minds often run in the same groove. I often used to hear the ladies say, 'How *well* Mr. Worsley preaches!' '*Such* originality of idea,' and so on."

"You are horrid to talk of your father so, Harry," said Miss Hatton, who could not forbear from a laugh; "but our Vicar always composed his own sermons. However, if it will please you, I will allow he had one fault: he didn't always shake hands as if he meant it. Indeed, his usual hand-shake was quite aggravating; it conveyed so plainly, 'Pray understand that I don't extend any real warmth of feeling towards *you*.'"

They had been sitting in the dining-room. Ethel now came in, and asked them to go into the drawing-room, as the cloth had to be laid for dinner.

She listened to her sister's last remark, and remembered that Mr. Manley had always held *her* hand in a warm, lingering pressure. She was now suffering greatly. She had heard Mr. Leslie's account, and her remorse was very great. She could not lose the thought of her own folly in distrusting him; she positively hated herself. But, at the same time, she did not think the explanation sufficient. What cloud could this Mr. Reginald—whom no one had ever heard of—be under to justify Mr. Manley in entirely destroying his happiness

and hers by not telling her Mrs. Reginald was his sister. Greatly as she grieved, still she could not think he could have had any sufficient excuse for his reticence to her.

As Mr. Leslie had declared he would do, he left no stone unturned. Not content with going round personally to nearly every one he knew, he summoned a public meeting, at which he took care that reporters should be present. He then stated such facts as he considered advisable, and made so strong and convincing a speech in Mr. Manley's favor that every one in the room felt ashamed to think of the manner in which so good a man had been driven away from them.

"Yes," said the mayor (who had been re-elected), meditatively, "I said at the time that perhaps we 'ad been a little 'asty, and I see we 'ave. Perhaps some compensation—" and he fingered his purse as if with the idea of offering Mr. Manley a five-pound note!

A brilliant idea at once struck Mr. Leslie.

"The only compensation we can make him," he said, "is by carrying forward and at once completing the work he had at heart. Let us *now* subscribe for the spire fund." For he was well aware that public feeling is very fleeting and fluctuating, and that in the first glow of their indignation and regret the congregation would be likely to contribute far more handsomely than when they had to a certain extent cooled down. He knew that Mr. Manley would have said that the money was of far less value than the spirit in which it was given; but, for his part, he was quite willing to take people's money without their feelings. These he considered might be thrown in *gratis*, but that was purely optional.

His suggestion was received with acclamation, and the requisite money to complete the work was subscribed in the room. As for the peal of bells, they were quite finished and ready to be hung. By the end of April the spire was completed, the vane flying, and, to the great delight of the parishioners, the first peal had been rung.

As to Mrs. Vincent, she was overjoyed that the Vicar's name was cleared at last, and Captain Vincent also expressed himself much pleased. To celebrate the proceeding, she declared that she should name the bells in the following manner: The clock bell was to be "Mr. Manley." Then followed "The Vicar," "Theophilus," "John" (Mr. Manley's second name); and as, said Mrs. Vincent, the company was so very good, she wished herself and her husband to be among it, and would therefore call two of the remaining bells "Rupert" and "Amaryllis," their Christian names. The other two bells she altogether declined to name, some vague idea that Mr. Manley might one day return and name them himself actuating her.

As for Captain Vincent, he roared with laughter at the names selected, and said it would be the joke of the town. But she declared that Captain Vincent's wife could do no wrong in Newforth, and it was her wish that it should be so, in order to show the people how completely it was owing to Mr. Manley that they had the bells at all.

The names were known all over the town, where the joy at the

late Vicar's rehabilitated character was great; and, as the clock bell struck, it was no uncommon thing for the passing mariners to say, "There goes 'Manley,' he's striking eleven, he is."

CHAPTER XLIII.

CAMBERWELL LIFE.

MR. LESLIE was passing along the top of the cliffs one day when he met Ethel Hatton. Now, he had always felt a great degree of indignation, as far as she was concerned; and, seeing how apparently indifferent she was looking, he decided that she was not at all feeling recent events as she ought.

He joined her, and made a hasty resolution that, under pledge of absolute secrecy, he would tell her the whole story. "She isn't good enough for him," he thought, "but, who knows, if the truth is told, whether one day they might not make it up between them, should he ever return from this missionary business."

"I want to speak to you about Mr. Manley, Miss Ethel," he said, with some degree of asperity. And then, on her giving her word that she would reveal the circumstances to no one, he told her the entire history of Mr. and Mrs. Carter.

She listened in silence, her color coming and going.

"Mr. Leslie," she said, when he had finished, "if you wished to bring my unhappiness still more closely home to me, you have succeeded. Still, I am very glad to know the real circumstances," and, with a bow, she left him.

She took the cliff-path and walked on towards the Cove, then, changing her mind, she crossed the high road and entered the well-remembered wood. On this sweet spring day the wood was delicious; but she heeded no outward circumstances, she felt utterly crushed by her grief and regret. "O Phil!" she exclaimed, "if you would only come back to me, I do not think there would be any way too hard for me to show my love to you." But she knew that he would not come back, or even if by any chance he should return to the place, she alone out of every one might not welcome him. She was sure that every one else would receive him with joy and acclamation—all except the one woman who loved him better than all the world.

Then she began to wonder what she could do to prove that she repented of her past want of trust in him. If any course of action could be discovered, she would gladly fulfil it. To some minds there is a marvellous attraction in the idea of expiatory religion; Ethel's was one of them. She would then have joined the Church of Rome, and have spent her time in prayer and penance, if she could have believed in that church. But she did not believe in it; and she was also aware that Mr. Manley, though he judged neither creed nor sect, personally had but little faith in it. In addition, she remembered

how continuously he had urged on his hearers the prior claims of home duties, and how wrong it was in his sight to forsake these for sentimental claims. If she would please him, she must not then seek for outside duties, unless they should be sent her. But she was very wretched. Her home occupations were not sufficient to engross her, and although she still visited her district, and went to church, this latter recalled Mr. Manley so strongly to her mind that, very often, instead of attending to the service, she was simply lost in thoughts of him and his whereabouts. But now a call for outside work arose most unexpectedly.

There was living in London a sister of her father's, a cold, disagreeable, and narrow-minded woman. None of the family had seen her for some years; the Admiral never went to town, Mrs. Parker never went to Newforth. She had three young children, whom none of the Hattons had ever seen. One morning in this spring a letter arrived from Mrs. Parker's doctor, saying that she had had a stroke of paralysis, and, as she seemed to have neither relations nor intimate friends, he wished to know what was to be done.

Admiral Hatton at once went to London to look into the state of affairs. On his return he said that his sister had recovered her speech, but was very helpless still. The house was in the greatest disorder, and she greatly wished that Gertrude or Ethel might go to live with her for a time to keep house; but that, he said, he had told her was out of the question.

Ethel listened attentively, and thought that surely this was the call for which she had been waiting.

"I will go, father," she said.

"Nonsense," returned the Admiral; "it's not a fit house for you to go to, all at sixes and sevens! *and in such a neighborhood, too!*"

"Some one ought to go," she replied. "You say Aunt Marion is too poor to engage a nurse. Of course, mother cannot leave you and the house; Gertrude cannot go, on account of Harry; while I," she added, sadly, "have no one who particularly wants me."

Some argument ensued. Admiral Hatton was very much against her going. His sister had married beneath her, and, although her husband was now dead, he could not overcome his dislike to the entire connection.

"One of my daughters to go to a hole of a place in Camberwell," he said, "where there will be neither a breath of fresh air, nor society, nor even decent comfort!"

"I shall not go for the sake of enjoying myself," said Ethel. "I suppose it is quite certain that Aunt Marion cannot be left alone, and that some one must go. Why not I as well as any one else?"

"You are not strong enough," he urged. But Ethel declared that she was stronger than she looked.

"I really am afraid that she must go," now said her mother. "She is anxious to do so, and she can but return should the work prove too heavy for her. I do not see else what is to become of your sister."

So, after some argument, it was arranged, and Ethel bade farewell to Newforth for a time.

It was not without reason that Admiral Hatton described his sister's house as "a hole of a place."

It was one of a small, dingy row, in a shabby, unfrequented street. There was no traffic to speak of in it, but none the less was there no fresh air.

Now that the summer was approaching, the heat was great, the air was heavy and misty; and, even on the day of her coming, Ethel pined for the fresh sea air.

On her arrival, her heart had sunk within her. On leaving the cab which brought her, she had noted the limp, drabby muslin curtains that hung from what was called the drawing-room windows. But what a drawing-room! Their own was shabby, but it was not pretentious; it was also large, and always filled with flowers and books, and little trifles of ladies' work, and so on. Here a gaudy-patterned carpet adorned the floor, imitation wax flowers and fruit abounded, the chintz furniture was torn, and large but vilely executed pictures hung on the walls. The children's toys were scattered about the room, the antimacassars (crochet-work antimacassars) hung awry.

The slovenly maid-of-all-work said she would call the children. Down they came, pell-mell, helter-skelter, and rushed up to kiss her. Their mouths were very dirty, their hair in frightful disorder. Ethel smiled faintly, and tried to look as if she were glad to see them. Alas! she was not glad. She took out her handkerchief and surreptitiously wiped off the mark of their sticky lips from her cheek. There were three children—Georgina, aged twelve; Robert, aged ten; and Madeline, aged eight.

A message came down that Mrs. Parker would be glad to see Ethel. She went into an untidy passage, the oilcloth frayed out on either side, and up a very shabbily carpeted staircase. Her aunt's room was on the first landing. Here the same untidiness and squalor prevailed.

Mrs. Parker was sitting up in bed. She was a woman of forty-five, but looked older. Her face was withered, and drawn with pain; her eyes gleamed from deep hollows beneath her brows; her whole appearance was forbidding.

Ethel smiled, and asked her how she was. She began to talk about her own ailments, and kept her niece standing beside her for fully half an hour, without even asking her to take off her hat, or have some refreshment after her journey.

Ethel felt as if she could have dropped before the conversation was over, her energy being greater than her strength. She would have taken a chair, but on every one there was a pile of clothes, books, and other articles, which she feared to disturb. At last she was dismissed, and went to her room. But oh, how she hated her room! A narrow, sloping-roofed attic, in which, except in the centre, she had barely room to stand upright. The window was simply a skylight in the roof, so that view of any sort there was none. The sun shone on the slates, making the heat of the room intense; besides, a general air of stuffiness pervaded the mattress and bedding—it was like musty straw.

The toilet arrangements were exceedingly primitive—no dressing-table, a small looking-glass hung on the wall, a washstand, one chair,

and a tiny cupboard, for clothes, completed the furniture. Now, both Gertrude and Ethel Hatton had always been exceedingly dainty as to their rooms. They were prettily ornamented with simple contrivances—flowers, seaweeds, small knick-knacks, and were the pleasantest rooms in the house. Here there was barely space for Ethel's trunks. She gave a sigh, and prepared to change her travelling-dress; but before she had time to unbutton it, her door was burst open by Miss Georgina, who exclaimed:

"Ethel, tea is ready, and ma says you're not to keep it waiting, but are to come at once."

In the underground dining-room, next the kitchen, tea was laid. The tablecloth was certainly not clean; a very common, ill-matched tea-set was on the tray, a stale loaf and a pat of *very* London butter on the table.

"You must cut some bread-and-butter for us," said Georgina; "we are hungry."

Ethel did so.

Before she had time to pour out the tea, the pile of bread-and-butter had disappeared, and she was ordered to cut another.

"I wish to have some tea first," she said. "You must wait a minute or two."

"Ma said you were to do what we told you," remarked Madeline; "she said so last night."

Ethel ignored the remark.

"And who sees that your mother has her tea?" she asked.

"Jane generally takes it, but after this ma said you must. She has thin bread-and-butter; you had better cut it now, and mind it's cut nicely."

Ethel cut a slice or two, but she had never been accustomed to cut bread-and-butter; she was tired, and the knife slipped. It was scarcely a success. Such as it was, however, she sent it up by Jane.

"After this, I should think *you* might take up your mother's tea, Georgina," she said.

"Oh, no," returned Georgina; "I'm sure I can't; you must."

Down came Jane.

"Missus says this bread-and-butter won't do; you must cut some more, Miss Hatton."

Ethel obeyed, this time with better success. Her own tea was now quite cold, the unwonted fatigue had given her a racking headache, and she could not eat a morsel.

As soon as the meal was ended she was told her aunt wanted her, and on her entrance she was ordered to put the room to rights—no easy task—and, after that, to attend to her aunt's wants for the night, fetch her supper, light the gas, and so on.

"You see, Ethel," she explained, "as you have come instead of a nurse, you must do a nurse's work and a niece's work, too. It can't be two ways. You can't be a fine lady-visitor, and a useful person at the same time."

Ethel replied that she had no wish to be a fine lady-visitor, that she was quite prepared to help as much as lay in her power.

"Very well," returned her aunt, "that's very satisfactory; now I sha'n't mind asking you to do anything."

It occurred to Ethel that she had not been troubled with many scruples before, but she said nothing.

"You must be up at six every morning, and help Jane," was her aunt's parting salutation, "because there are the children to see to, and my breakfast to get early, and other things; and since Jane has had no one to look after her, she has always been late."

Punctually at six the next morning Ethel came down. The night before she had held a long consultation with herself as to her duty, and had resolved that she would make *every* task imposed on her her duty—first, because it was right; and, secondly, but much easier reason, because it would prove her repentance to Phil. With this idea in her mind, she thought nothing would be too hard to bear. She attended to her aunt, made her morning meal as tempting as might be, dressed little Madeline, and then sat down to breakfast. The scene of the evening before was in a great measure repeated, with the additional vexation of seeing Robert's greasy fingers imprinted on her fresh morning-dress.

"Do you not go to school?" she asked at length, longing to be free from them for an hour or two.

"No," replied Georgina; "since ma has been ill, we haven't been able to afford it. She says you have had a good education, and you must teach us."

"I?" echoed Ethel, faintly, and then she resolved that this heavy and unexpected duty she would fulfil to the best of her ability. She told the children to bring their books. They did so—old, shabby books most of them, and so dirty; Ethel put a corner of her pocket-handkerchief between the pages and her fingers while touching them. She endeavored to examine the children as to what they already knew, but the examination ended abruptly, in consequence of a fight between Robert and Madeline. Unlike Mr. Manley, who could tame any child in a few minutes, she did not take to children, and was entirely at a loss as to how to amuse or interest them. But duty seeming to demand that they should receive two hours' instruction, she accordingly gave it; on dismissing them, to be met by Jane, with the message that missus couldn't think why she hadn't been up to her long ago.

She went up and listened to a catalogue of grievances concerning Jane. And then she gave the children their dinner, which dinner was nothing but a scramble, and sat down in the afternoon to mend their clothes, having to run up and down stairs whenever her aunt's bell rang. By ten o'clock she was so tired she scarcely knew how to undress; but she determined to continue her self-appointed duty—her plain duty.

The round of one day was the round of every day. She was sent here, there, and everywhere—out with the children, on errands to shops to carry home grocery or other edible parcels, and sometimes was compelled to go messages to the doctor after dark. Sometimes, when sent by her aunt in the train on some errand, she would look

from the window down into the crowded, narrow, foul streets; would remark the dismal little houses, the wretched strips of garden in which there were always clothes hanging out to dry, the miserable, wicked-looking women and men hanging about the filthy courts, and her heart would sicken as she thought of what their lives were. As for the finer parts of London, she never went to them. With her aunt she had neither society nor amusement; there was only one unceasing round of work. But she bore it bravely, trying her hardest to improve the untidy house, to put up with her aunt's temper, to sustain the many tasks set her, saying the while, "It is what Phil would wish me to do; he would say I was right."

In her letters home she did not detail her discomfort. She knew, had she done so, that she would not have been allowed to remain a day. She made her accounts as brief as possible, enlarging principally on the news received from home. She was not well, but although she looked pale, and longed for the sea, she was not ill, and resolved she would not give in.

Then one day, in the midst of her uncongenial toil, she received a letter from her sister—a letter which caused her heart to beat and her cheeks to burn; a letter that made her wonder how such news could be true. It said that Mr. Manley was coming at once to England and—more.

CHAPTER XLIV.

INVITATION TO RETURN.

BEFORE Mr. Manley received the bundle of letters from Newforth, he had held much conversation with Mr. Yorke as to his probable prospects. Both were agreed it was out of the question to go on with the mission work.

"I knew it wouldn't do, Phil," said Yorke; "the whole thing is a mistake, which, of course, you see now."

"But I do *not* see it," returned Mr. Manley, promptly. "My work was a failure, I grant you, because I was wrong in continuing there alone; but with efficient help, time, and patience, I see reasonable grounds for hoping that the children might eventually be trained into something very different. I would try it again myself had not the climate and various things affected my health so terribly; and although I am quite strong now, I scarcely think I am justified in running so much risk again—at all events, not just yet."

Yorke gave a slight shrug.

"I dare say we can manage anything, *if* it is continued long enough. After the whole of your life has been worn out, perhaps two or three children will have learned their letters."

Mr. Manley laughed.

"No, no; I won't allow that. I am not at all sure that I shall not try again one of these days; I don't like to be beaten."

Now, when the letters from England arrived, Mr. Manley was much moved; for they contained no less startling news than that everyone in Newforth was delighted and gratified to hear the true story of Mr. Manley's visits to the Cove, that they were grieved and distressed to think how greatly they had wronged him, and, with one accord, they begged him to return to them.

The facts were these: Mr. Rowen was beginning to find the parish too much for him. The ladies alone were too much; but when joined to them there were the church-wardens, and the organist, and the choir, and the verger, and the mayor (who would put in his word now), and the seat-holders—these combined influences were driving the persecuted Vicar to the verge of distraction. He bore up as long as he could, feebly endeavoring to combat the outside public, but succumbing entirely as far as his own household was concerned, his cook having long since ruled him with a rod of iron, when, all of a sudden, an idea struck him, so startling in itself that he remained lost in contemplation of his own magnanimity. He would resign the living to Mr. Manley, and wish him joy of it! The living was in the gift of the Bishop of W——, who, he felt sure, would gladly sanction the exchange.

This proved to be the case. The bishop expressed his willingness to consent, under the circumstances, and added a few graceful words as to the kindness of Mr. Rowen in suffering this reparation to be made to one who had so long and so unjustly suffered. But had he said all that was in his mind, he would have added that on his part he would be *delighted* to see the exchange made, Mr. Manley being a man after his own heart, which Mr. Rowen was not. However, the bishop was a man of tact; he reserved his opinion.

It could, however, scarcely have been flattering to Mr. Rowen to have observed the unconcealed delight of his congregation on hearing that he was going to leave them.

"Oh, be joyful!" said Mr. Leslie, privately.

"Scrumptiously scrumptious," said Miss Hatton.

For that Mr. Manley would accept the living was received as a matter of course by every one; but, had they only known it, Mr. Manley had not the smallest intention of accepting the living.

"It is quite out of the question," he said to himself. "I should not think of returning to Newforth, although I am very glad they know the truth, and that I am not quite the villain they took me for." For of his sister's visit he had heard few particulars, and had no idea of the painful revelations that she had made to Mr. Leslie.

The request had been a very public one, as befitted the congregation, seeing that the condemnation had been so very public. Mr. Rowen had written, the mayor had written, the church-wardens had written; but, more than this, there was a huge petition sent (at Mr. Leslie's instigation), signed by the organist and choir and every seat-holder in the church, begging him to return; and not only signed by them, but by the poor of the parish also. It was a huge packet, and contained hundreds of signatures. He was to telegraph his reply.

Mr. Manley was greatly touched, as also was Mr. Yorke.

"Phil," he said, very gravely, "I am more delighted than I can tell you. There is only one drawback to my joy; that we shall lose you."

"I shall go to England, now that my character"—he said this word with some bitterness—"is restored to me; but I shall certainly not go to Newforth. I do not think it would be at all advisable."

"Have you a prospect of any other living?" asked Yorke.

"Not the slightest; and, forasmuch as livings do not grow on trees," he added, with a smile, "I must take a curacy, for curacies are not hard to get."

But though he spoke bravely, and with his old determined air, he knew that to a man who had been a vicar this would be a very bitter pill to swallow. It was not that he felt it derogatory to him. Since that night in the bush the strange humility had never left him; he felt that to be a curate was quite sufficient *honor*; but he knew full well that there are vicars and vicars, and to work with one who was careless or indifferent or inferior would be a sharp trial to him. He had always been so completely master when he was Vicar, that he was now fully prepared to serve; he said this to himself with all the humility of a proud man.

"Take a curacy, Phil?" said Yorke. "Nonsense! I have no doubt you were a most excellent curate in your time, but your day for that has gone by. That's the worst of you parsons," he added, with a laugh, "you *must* be masters. Why, if you stayed here much longer, I shouldn't know it was my house; they all come to you now instead of me."

Mr. Manley laughed heartily.

"This is the first time it has ever occurred to me or to any one else that you were not master. It is high time I should go, I think."

"Seriously, though," said Yorke, "why not take the living? You were happy there, and much beloved; if you return, you will become a sort of hero. If you had any better prospect, I would not urge you; but I can't bear the idea of your living on a hundred a year."

"Perhaps I might get a hundred and fifty," said Mr. Manley, laughing. "I think I am worth it."

Some argument then ensued, but Mr. Manley was firm. He at once prepared his telegram, which was to the effect that, though greatly gratified by their kind words and invitation to return to them, he thought it best for both parties that he should not do so. He would write full particulars. This he sent, having previously shown it to Yorke; but he was quite unaware that the latter supplemented it with a private one of his own to Mr. Leslie, which said, "Don't take 'No' for an answer. I think he will come, if you try again."

The subject of Mr. Manley's means was troubling Yorke greatly. As for the loan from Mr. Philpot, that had long since been repaid, but doing so had left Mr. Manley with next to nothing. Yorke had begged him to accept a loan of two hundred pounds some time be-

fore, and had seemed so much hurt when he refused, that, as usual, he sacrificed his own inclination and took it.

"I am not going to live on you forever," he said, when the subject of his leaving was mooted.

"Live on me?" said Yorke. "What an extraordinary way some people have of putting things, Phil. Now, if *I* had been asked, I should have said that a most distinguished and talented clergyman had done me the honor of becoming my private chaplain, and was too proud to accept a penny for his services."

"I shall repay you as soon as I get to England," Mr. Manley said, with reference to the loan. "I can raise the money very well." He meant, by selling a reversion that was in his possession.

"If you repay me before you have a living, I shall be seriously hurt," said Yorke. "What a proud fellow you are, Phil!" (who himself, on some points, was one of the proudest men that ever lived). "But, when you *have* a living," he added, laughing, "I'll come down on you, and sell up every stick and stone if I don't get my money."

That night, when Mr. Manley was left alone, he took out all the letters he had received, with a deep feeling of thankfulness. He had suffered more than any one had been aware of in the imputations cast on him; he knew that that evening, when he had stood on the platform of the Town Hall to defend himself publicly, had been so exquisitely painful that the memory would never be forgotten by him; but he did not think it befitting his dignity that he should be turned out at one time and fetched back at another. A weighty reason with him also was that Ethel Hatton still lived in the place. True, he had overcome, he thought, much of his bitterness against her, but he would still gladly avoid her.

He looked again at the letters. There was Mr. Rowen's, written in a somewhat condescending spirit—that Mr. Manley could not fail to observe—but well-meant, on the whole. His jubilation at the prospect of escaping from Newforth could not be contained, coincident with a certain amount of self-gratulation as to his own goodness in making the offer, which was barely concealed. As Mr. Manley very well knew, he said, he had ample means of his own without a living at all; but he should apply to the bishop for some small living in the country where there were none but farmers and countrymen, and—this with huge dashes—"he hoped he should get away from the *women*, and *never* see a lady again."

Mr. Leslie's letter was very hearty and pressing; the letter of a true friend.

Admiral Hatton's was short, and written with a certain amount of unconscious reluctance. He began thus:

"Now, you know, Manley, you needn't bear malice. I was wrong, and you were right. Suppose you let bygones be bygones, and come back to us. We will all give you a hearty welcome. At the same time, I do think you might have given us a hint that the lady was your sister, but, as I said before, let bygones be bygones, and come back."

As Mr. Manley put the letter down he gave a sigh, and could not but remember—setting his lips sternly as he did so—that he had been ordered out of Admiral Hatton's house on the last occasion when he had spoken to him, except purely on business.

The mayor's letter was well-intentioned and honest, though scarcely soothing:

"MY DEAR SIR," it said—"At one time we all thought you were a rascal, and now we know you are not. We hope you will come back; we all hope so. I'm not ashamed to own it when I've been wrong, and Mr. Yorke was quite right when he said it was a bad day for Newforth when you was turned out. So, hoping this will find you in health, as it leaves me at present, I am, sir,

"Your obedient servant, THE MAYOR OF NEWFORTH."

CHAPTER XLV.

EUREKA.

THE news that Mr. Manley would not return was received in Newforth with dismay. What was to be done? Every one was decided on one point, and that was that he *must* return; that they could not do without him. His refusal enhanced his marketable value tenfold. Fortunately, they had Mr. Yorke's telegram to fall back on, and a consultation was immediately held as to what was to be telegraphed in reply.

Mr. Leslie felt very disheartened. He knew Mr. Manley to be so thoroughly determined, and so decidedly a man of his word, that he could not believe that he would alter his mind. He thought over the subject most anxiously. One suggested one thing, one another. "Tell him he *must*," said one; "Beg and entreat him," said another; and a babel of confusion ensued.

At last Mr. Leslie threw his hat up in the air, and, shouting "Eureka," gave a jump like a schoolboy.

"What in the world is the matter?" asked his friends.

"I will bet any one in this room a sovereign that my telegram will fetch him!"

"What is it?" asked every one.

But Mr. Leslie would not impart his intelligence at once.

"You have all been thinking," he said, "that Mr. Manley was like the dog in the child's poetry:

'The dog will come when he is called,
The cat will walk away.'

But *I* knew that he was neither like the cat nor the dog. This is the telegram we will send, putting it to his Christianity: 'If you do not return to us, we shall know that we have injured you too greatly, and that you have not forgiven us.' If that doesn't do it, nothing will. *I* have baited the hook, and *I* will land Mr. Manley."

His proposal was received with acclamation, and the mayor said he would pay for the telegram out of his own pocket.

Miss Hatton met Mr. Leslie soon after the meeting, and extracted from him the fullest particulars.

"Oh," she exclaimed, joyfully; "it will be like old times to get *the* Vicar back again. Of course, if you remember, he always preached on Sunday morning, but Ethel and I used to go in the evening, with the exciting feeling of drawing tickets out of a lottery. If Mr. Rowen entered the reading-desk, we knew it was all right, that the Vicar would preach, and we had drawn a prize; if the Vicar entered the reading-desk, we knew we had drawn a blank."

"It strikes me," said Mr. Leslie, "that it's lucky for you, Miss Hatton, that the Vicar never heard you say that. *Wouldn't* you have got a rowing, that's all?"

"I know I should," she replied, laughing. "I always was afraid of him, although I liked him so immensely. Now, Ethel took liberties that *I* shouldn't have ventured on."

"Did she?"

"Yes. Isn't it a pity their engagement should have been broken off?"

"Perhaps it will come on again," said Mr. Leslie; but Miss Hatton shook her head.

"How does Miss Ethel like London?" he asked.

"She *can't* like living where she is, but she won't come home. She has got hold of some notion that it is her duty. One of us must go up and see her before long; only I am so taken up with Harry, and neither my father nor mother have been well lately. Well, good-bye, and let me know the moment you hear any news."

CHAPTER XLVI.

MR. MANLEY'S DECISION.

THE second telegram greatly astonished Mr. Manley. He took a day to reconsider his determination. The matter had now been put in a totally different light. Would it be right now to retain his pride? Would it be advisable? He was beginning to think it would not. They had put it on the plea of his showing he possessed the love of a Christian pastor towards them; on this ground he thought he ought to return.

Yorke said not one word; he made up his mind that he would not. But at ten o'clock that night, when he was walking up and down the lawn, smoking, Mr. Manley joined him.

"Yorke," he said, "I have decided to return to Newforth."

Yorke grasped his hand. "I am very glad to hear it, Phil," he said, warmly. "I am sure it is wise for you to do so."

Mr. Manley decided that he would return without delay, by the next mail.

After the great kindness shown him by Mr. Philpot and Mr. Groves at Campertown, he said he should like to see them before he started, on which Yorke immediately invited them over. On their arrival it transpired that they, too, would shortly visit England.

"You must come and stay with me at my vicarage," said Mr. Manley, warmly; "and although I shall never be able to repay your kindness to me, still I should very much like you to come and see me and my church."

They replied that they would make a point of doing so, that nothing would give them greater pleasure.

It seemed so wonderful to Mr. Manley to say "my church," "my living"—he who, but yesterday, had been a wanderer on the face of the earth. The old life at Newforth came back to him, as if it were yesterday—this life which he had thought had been put away forever.

"Do you know," said Yorke to his wife, "that I don't wonder at a parson being sometimes spoiled by being made too much of. Now, look at Manley; when he returns he will receive quite an ovation. *He* will stand it right enough, but few men could."

"If Mr. Manley ever became conceited, or self-conscious," said Mrs. Yorke, "his entire charm would be gone. It is the absence of this which gives him so great an influence, which he would lose at once if he appreciated himself in the same way that other people do. Eloquent men, and so on, are plentiful enough; a man without a vestige of conceit is quite a rarity."

"Upon my word, young woman!" said her husband, with a laugh.

"Oh," she replied, brightly, "you may say what you will, but men are twice as conceited as women. I'm sure of it."

"I know a young lady who used to be always praising *me*," he returned, "and now she is surprised at finding any one is conceited."

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE LOST PARCEL.

ETHEL HATTON continued her weary task with unflinching perseverance; with greatly renewed hope, now that she had heard that Mr. Manley was coming back again. Some vague hope that he might hear of her, and think she was doing her duty, actuated her. Her life was dreadful to her, but custom had blunted the first keen feeling of disgust. Her aunt was now well enough to leave her room, and sit down-stairs during a portion of the day. She would not hear of Ethel leaving her; she said she could not do without her. But this was the only praise the girl received. Mrs. Parker found fault perpetually, and imposed the hardest tasks on her, without ever seeking to place any small means of enjoyment in her way.

But to Ethel the hardest sacrifice of all had been to give up most of the church-going to which she had been accustomed for so long.

To hear any one say that it was a proof of goodness to go often to church greatly amazed her. To go to church appeared to her unmixed enjoyment. Feeling thus, it was a hard trial to stay at home herself in order to permit others to attend; but she knew that Mr. Manley would have been the last person to advocate a selfish religion, and that he would have told her it betokened far greater Christianity to stay than to go. Her thoughts were now perpetually with him. She lived in dreamland, oftentimes answering mechanically when spoken to, and quite oblivious as to the events passing around her. Her aunt would often say, sharply, "Do wake up, Ethel, and attend to your work!" And she would give a faint smile and proceed with her irksome tasks. Of all these, teaching the children was the hardest and most uncongenial; she thought she had had enough of children for the remainder of her life.

And now that Mr. Manley was fairly on his way home, an immense discussion took place as to what steps should be taken for his reception. For a wonder unanimity of feeling prevailed—viz., that no honor that could be paid him would be too great; furthermore, that it would be advisable to give a tangible proof of their satisfaction. But in what way could this best be done? Every one knew how proud a man Mr. Manley had been in one way, albeit so humble in another. The point became one of some difficulty. That a banquet—a public banquet—should be given in his honor, and that the poor should be feasted, was easy enough, but how to get him to accept a personal present without wounding his pride?

At last an idea occurred to them. The vicarage furniture had remained on with Mr. Rowen, but it was now very much the worse for wear: might they not refurnish the house, and represent to him that the furniture now went with the vicarage? He *could* not be affronted at that. So it was agreed on, and, with no deference whatever to the feelings of Mr. Rowen, who was to remain until Mr. Manley arrived, painters and paper-hangers were sent in, and the house was turned upside down.

Captain Vincent was posted in the latest news, and one day went to Newforth, accompanied by his wife. She at once called on Admiral and Mrs. Hatton, and asked if the church-wardens would allow them, as a great favor, to undertake the furnishing of the Vicar's study, on the understanding that their names were to be scrupulously concealed. The church-wardens graciously allowed this to be done, and Mrs. Vincent sent for a first-class ecclesiastical decorator, with whom she held a long conversation.

All these details were written to Ethel in London. She thought sadly how, if she had not mistrusted Mr. Manley, *she* would have been installed into the vicarage, and how, most probably, if *she* had remained true to him, he would never have left the place at all—the mere fact of her faith in him would have spoken volumes. Then she thought of his noble life abroad, and how manfully he had borne his sufferings; for the story of the hardships he had undergone in the bush had been fully made known in a letter from Mr. Yorke to Captain Vincent, by whom the news had been freely circulated.

A living had now been procured for Mr. Rowen—a country living, as he wished, where there were not above two hundred inhabitants, including those of the outlying cottages, and where, on his visit of inspection, he did not meet with a single person who, by any stretch of courtesy, could be called a lady. He had decided on leaving Newforth the day before Mr. Manley arrived, he already having been ordered to leave the vicarage while the furnishing was taking place, and stay with the Allens, who had invited him. He obeyed, though, among all the ladies, if there were one more than another whom he particularly detested, it was Mrs. Allen.

It was as well that he should not remain to welcome Mr. Manley, for the joy evinced at the prospect of the latter's return was altogether too much for flesh and blood to stand. Even the poor people, who had wheedled money out of him in cases where Mr. Manley would have steadily refused one penny, would say to him, with an air of odious satisfaction, "Oh, *sha'n't* we be glad, sir, when the good gentleman returns," and poor Mr. Rowen would retire disgusted.

One day he was walking up and down the churchyard, when he saw a stout woman approach him—a homely-featured, red-faced woman. Instinctively he turned to flee, but she cut off his retreat, and stood facing him. It was Mrs. Stevens, from Fisherman's Cove, but he did not recognize her, as he now visited the Cove but seldom. Her face was flushed and beaming with excitement.

"Don't go away, sir," she said, hurriedly, as Mr. Rowen would have turned away. "I have summat most important to tell ye."

He put his hand in his pocket, prepared to offer her a shilling if she would not go away without; for Mr. Rowen, by dint of being constantly worried, had completely lost the forbearance he had really displayed in Mr. Manley's time.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"See here, sir," she cried, displaying a large packet, most carefully done up in a thick wrapper and sealed in a great many places; "this is what I have found."

Mr. Rowen took the packet from her, and examined it. It was addressed only "H. C." He could make nothing of it.

"Where did you find it?" he asked, without feeling any interest in the subject.

"You remember, of course, sir," she began, volubly, "the lady and gentleman I had staying with me—for they *was* a lady and gentleman, although they was dressed common—that time when Mr. Manley came to see them so often, and all the talk was made, not knowin' the lady was his sister. Well, sir, to-day, this very mornin', I looked up, as I was a settin' in the sitting-room, where they used to be, and I thinks to meself, 'Why not have a good turn-out?' So I *had* a good turn-out, and I took up the carpet. Just about in the middle of the floor I sees a crack in the boards, so I thinks, thinks I, 'One of them there boards is loose,' and I gives it a tread with my foot. You might have knocked me down with a feather, sir"—Mr. Rowen looked as if he greatly doubted that—"when, on my foot givin' way, owin' to the board goin' down under me, I treads on

somethin' soft, and sees a corner of this packet and pulls it out. So I up and says to meself, 'That was put there by my lodger.' He was queer in his head at times, he was, and didn't rightly know what he was a-doin' of, though I will say that a nicer and more considerate *lady* never lived than she were. So then I says, 'I must take this to our Mr. Rowen to give to the Vicar'—this to poor Mr. Rowen's face, he, the Vicar of the parish, but acknowledged as such by no one!—"he can give it to his sister."

Mr. Rowen handled the parcel delicately, as if he feared it might contain dynamite—indeed, to tell the truth, some such notion had crossed his mind.

He was still looking at it when Mr. Leslie went by. He told him the whole story; but before he had time to speak the final words Mr. Leslie had jumped on to the nearest flat tombstone, taken off his hat, and shouted, "Hurrah!" at the top of his voice.

Mr. Rowen thought he was mad; he felt afraid to remain in his vicinity. Mrs. Stevens looked as if she shared his apprehensions.

"Hurrah!" shouted Mr. Leslie again, this time leaping from the tombstone, and seizing the packet from Mr. Rowen's bewildered touch. "Hurrah, I say!"

Then he turned to Mrs. Stevens, saying, "Here is a sovereign for you, my good woman; and if the packet is what I think, you shall have ten pounds down."

Mrs. Stevens's doubts as to his sanity were now completely removed.

"Thank 'ee, sir; thank 'ee, kindly," she said.

"And now, my good woman, take yourself off as fast as you like" returned Mr. Leslie, "I want to talk to Mr. Rowen."

Mrs. Stevens departed, nothing loath.

Then Mr. Leslie said that it was his opinion that the parcel contained missing deeds and bonds of incalculable value, and announced his intention of going up to London, without an hour's delay, for the purpose of depositing it in the bank whence the bonds had been missed; for even in his excitement Mr. Leslie did not say "stolen" to Mr. Rowen.

But the coolness of this proceeding was a little too much even for Mr. Rowen. "Excuse me," he said; "the parcel was placed in my custody, to give to Mr. Manley, and I decline to give it up."

"I beg your pardon," returned Mr. Leslie, who was already some steps down the road, "but possession is nine points of the law, you know, and I can't give this up. You can have me up for felony, if you like," he shouted, as he departed.

Mr. Rowen felt extremely angry, which was scarcely to be wondered at.

"I should like to have seen him take it from *Manley*," he ejaculated, wrathfully.

"And indeed so should I," put in a voice—that of Miss Hatton, who had been an amused and unseen observer of the latter portion of the scene; "but you are not Mr. Manley, you know, and never will be."

"Good-morning!" said Mr. Rowen, and turned into the vicarage.

It turned out as Mr. Leslie had expected. An enormous amount of property had been recovered, and his losses were now almost made good. He moved without delay into his former house, which was fortunately empty, and resumed his former prosperity. But on the same day the bonds were found he wrote a very kind letter to Mrs. Carter, or Reginald, as she must now be called, telling her all the circumstances, and adding that he was very glad he had dismissed all rancor from his mind *before* this event.

"The Vicar *will* be glad of this," he said; for Mr. Manley was now "the Vicar" with every one.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A FORTUNE.

MR. MANLEY arrived in England after a somewhat uneventful passage. On the voyage he had felt a calm, subdued sense of satisfaction at returning, but no elation. Joy seemed to have turned her back on him forever. He proceeded at once to London, and there a surprise awaited him.

The aunt with whom his sister had lived had lately died, leaving him the whole of her fortune, which was considerable. There was a clause in the will stating that out of this money he was to pay his sister £300 a year, in quarterly payments, as, had she money of her own, she would certainly try to make it over to her late husband's creditors. To apply any portion of her income for this purpose was expressly forbidden in the will, and, should she marry again, a certain sum of money was to be placed in trust for her, in lieu of the quarterly payments. Mr. Manley's own portion amounted to over £1000 a year. He was very pleased, for he had never professed to undervalue money. He at once thought of the good he could do, and how greatly his hands would be strengthened. "I thank God," he said.

After a day or two spent at the Charing Cross Hotel, his sister came to see him. She rejoiced over his safe return, and cried in his arms. They had so much to tell one another, that it was late in the night before they separated.

He asked if she would come and live with him at Newforth, but she replied, "No;" that she considered a clergyman was better without any lady in his house, unless it were his wife.

"You see, Phil," she said, "you would direct your wife what to do, and she would do it; your tastes and sympathies would run in common. But however much a man may like his sister—and we love one another very dearly, Phil—it cannot be the same; their very similarity of disposition may cause their tastes to clash. And there are other reasons also. Of course, you ought to be master in your own house—"

"Of course I ought," put in Mr. Manley.

"And I, on the other hand, have been accustomed to being mistress. I feel we should be better apart."

"I will not urge you on this point; you shall entirely consult your own inclinations," he said, very kindly; "but you know perfectly well that I shall always give you a hearty welcome whenever you like to come."

"I am sure of that, Phil," she replied, earnestly; and then, in a few broken words, she told him how deeply she grieved for all the misery she and her husband had brought him, and how that every day of her life she prayed that he might be recompensed in this world, and have love and happiness restored to him.

"I am happy," he replied, gravely.

"Ah, Phil, dear!" she said, putting her hand on his face, "it is *earthly* happiness you want now; I pray that you may have it. I cannot bear to think of you living solitary, with no one to see to those small comforts which no one but a wife ever thinks of, and to pay you those small attentions which would only irritate you from any but a wife. I want you not only to be gravely happy; I want you to be joyful, as you used to be."

"*That* I shall never be again," he returned; "I cannot feel joyful any more. Thankful I do feel—very thankful, almost oppressed by the sense that my gifts are far greater than my deserts; but as to joy, that has fled forever."

"But why so, Phil?" asked his sister, in concern; "you are but a young man still—strong, athletic, young in your appreciation of life, and in many other ways. I cannot see why happiness should not be in store for you yet. Your cheeks look hollow still, dear; you should not have that patient, thoughtful look in your eyes—your eyes which used to glow and sparkle and dance. Tell me, can you and Ethel never be reconciled?"

He shook his head, saying, "I would prefer not to speak of her."

Mrs. Reginald was to remain in London for the present, Mr. Manley was to go to Newforth the next day. He received a letter in the evening from Mr. Leslie, saying he hoped the vicarage would be ready; but, if not, they would gladly put him up. The fact was that the preparations at the vicarage were so many that there was barely time to conclude them all.

The news of the restoration of the missing bonds had greatly cheered Mr. Manley. He began to feel that surely, though slowly, things were righting themselves; but when his sister had told him of Mr. Leslie's generous kindness, and of his forgiveness of her husband, he was greatly touched, and began to hope that all his labor in Newforth had not been in vain.

CHAPTER XLIX.

HIS ARRIVAL.

THE Vicar walked from the hotel to Charing Cross station, which adjoins, carrying his handbag; his luggage was large in quantity, and would follow him. He took a third-class ticket—indeed, he generally travelled third-class. Possessing all the latent pride of a man who knows that he cannot be taken for other than a gentleman, he was supremely careless as to his surroundings in travel; he actually preferred third-class, owing to the different company it brought him among, he being a profound student of human nature.

On this occasion he had the carriage to himself. He was glad of this, as he wanted to pursue the train of his reflections. It seemed to him but yesterday that he had come to Newforth, a stranger, unknowing what would await him. He thought of the kindly manner in which people had held out a friendly hand to him, of the regard they had shown him. And then he thought of her who had shown him more than regard, who had assured him of her unchangeable affection; but who, in the time of his troubles, had failed him. This wound was very deep still; it did not heal, it *could* not heal. Again recurred to his mind the verse, never heard without his thoughts connecting it with Ethel: "It was not an open enemy that hath done me this dishonor, then I could have borne it; but it was *thou*, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted." His heart was very sore still. He thought of how he should meet her. He had said he would not return to Newforth, and one reason, and that a weighty one, had been because she was there; but, now that he was returning, how should he treat her? Should he ignore her, should he treat her with disdain, or should he comport himself towards her in all respects as if she were any other young lady? He would do the last; he knew his pride would carry him through. That she had loved him he had never doubted—probably she loved him still; but oh, what was the worth of such love? It had been weighed in the balance, and found wanting.

Then he thought of the season in which his people had doubted him, had believed evil of him, had been on the point of appealing to his bishop, had been glad when, notwithstanding all he had done for them, they had known he was going. On this point he still felt some slight bitterness, in spite of the ample reparation they had made. Well, he would labor among them as before, seeking no thanks; he would go about as before. They had probably, many of them, forgotten both him and his teaching; but he would endeavor not to be discouraged, he would begin all over again. He wondered if they

had kept up any of the societies he had formed, the works he had inaugurated—above all, whether he should find that the church had been cared for in his absence; he thought he would walk quietly round, and ascertain before going home. But was he to go home? He remembered Mr. Leslie's letter: "If the vicarage is not in order, which we will see about, we will put you up." He certainly would go to the vicarage, if it were possible to do so; he wanted to be quiet before beginning his uphill task for the second time.

And then he thought about the journey he had taken on leaving Newforth—as he had thought forever—of his sadness of heart on the voyage out to Australia; and then of that time of hardest toil, and to all appearance fruitless toil, among the aborigines; most of all, of that time when he had lain down under the midnight sky, to die, as he believed. Was he a wiser man? he asked himself; if not, he was certainly a sadder. No, he could not feel joyful in his homecoming.

He caught sight of the sea. There it was, in the distance, blue and sparkling. And then he remembered the morning, soon after his first arrival, when, in vigorous health and in joyousness of heart, he had swam the race round the farther buoy with Lieutenant Campbell, and had beaten him easily. As the train slackened its speed he observed that the ships in the harbor were dressed; he supposed it was the wedding-day of one of the captains. What was going on? Surely there was a great crowd on the platform; eager faces looking into all the first-class carriages in the middle, and withdrawing in disappointment. Evidently some one of importance was expected.

Mr. Manley thought he would wait until most of the people had dispersed. He sat quietly on in his corner, till a voice shouted at the door of his carriage, "*Here he is!*" and he found himself taken possession of, and almost dragged out and shaken hands with by every one, until he thought he could shake hands no longer. The heartiest words of welcome were given him, the most beaming smiles. He made his way, still carrying his bag, in course of time to the entrance to the station.

But what was this? Here were the mayor and corporation drawn up to receive him—an honor that had never, within his memory, been done to any one save the Prince of Wales, on one occasion, and their county member. The mayor advanced and welcomed him in the name of the town. The Vicar smiled with the same smile as of old, and felt he could not trust himself to say much. And then he was told to enter a very handsome carriage, drawn by four horses, as he was to be driven through the town. Scarcely had he seated himself when he beheld the brass band—the identical band that in the old times had excruciated his ears. No sooner had the carriage begun to move than the band commenced playing, "See the conquering hero comes." This was altogether too much for the Vicar, who was glad enough to relieve his feelings anyhow: he burst into a hearty laugh, which was taken up by all around. He was driven slowly, for crowds lined the streets. On every side a welcome met him. He bowed and smiled right and left, until a sound arrested

his attention: the bells of the parish church, his dearly loved church, rung out a peal, and then, although a smile was still on his lips, the tears were in his eyes. He told them afterwards he had never been so surprised in his life.

He was to go to the vicarage, they told him; but what did he see on entering the grounds? There, assembled on the lawn, were the widows he had visited in their affliction, some of the sick he had ministered unto, the fishermen he had talked with, the children he had taught. His poor people, his own people, were all there. On all sides arose voices from them. "Welcome home, sir;" "Glad to see 'ee, sir;" "God bless your reverence;" "Welcome, welcome!" in every variety of expression.

Mr. Manley left the carriage, and stood on the top step of his house.

"My dear friends," he said, stretching out his hands—"my *very* dear friends"—and then he stopped, for the tears rolled down his cheeks.

Mr. Leslie at once sprung up on the steps beside him, and, waving his hat, cried, "Three cheers for the Vicar, and three times three," which were given with acclamation. "You shall make your speech this evening," said Mr. Leslie, "at the banquet."

And then the Vicar—called so by courtesy alone, at present, for he was not to be inducted for a week—the Vicar asked, what banquet, and was told there was to be one in his honor at eight that evening, at which a great many people would be present.

Now concerning this same banquet there had been grand discussions. Every one of any importance in the town was to be present; but, further, there were to be people from out of the town. Captain Vincent had signified his intention of being present, and Mr. Fortescue, on hearing the news, said he would come down from London on purpose—that he liked Mr. Manley; but that, in addition, it would be just as good as any play to see the mayor and the provincials.

But this did not satisfy Mrs. Vincent. She insisted that Lord Hilton ought to be invited; that she was sure the mayor and the townspeople would be only too glad to do so.

Captain Vincent laughed.

"That, my child, is likely enough; but Lord Hilton won't be anxious to come. Mr. Manley, no doubt, is a very good parson, but it's almost too much to expect Lord Hilton to welcome him."

"I will bet you a new dress, Rupert, that he will come if he is asked. We will drive over there now, and tell him about it."

"I like that," returned Captain Vincent. "What earthly good is a new dress to me? Well, I suppose we must go over. Upon my word, I am henpecked."

But, to Captain Vincent's astonishment, Lord Hilton declared he would be delighted to go.

"I'm not such an old man yet, Vincent," he said, "that I can't eat a good dinner; and I do like to see a wrong righted. I have heard about Mr. Manley from the bishop."

Now the Vicar would greatly have preferred to have spent the

evening alone, but he knew this was out of the question. And then he was told that the poor people on the lawn were to have a feast out of doors—it being now August—in Mr. Leslie's field, that evening at six, and that the Vicar, of course, must be present for a short time.

He heard a dog bark, and his old and faithful favorite came rushing forward and jumped on him, frantic with delight. The dog had been given to Mr. Leslie, who now restored him to his former master.

"I thank you, Leslie," said the Vicar; "I am *very* glad to have him again."

At present he had not been able even to turn round, but had stood with his back to the front door. At the front door stood Mrs. Jonson, her face beaming with smiles. The Vicar shook hands with her heartily, and said he was very glad indeed to see her.

Who could have believed, he thought, that, after an absence of nearly a year, so many things would be unchanged? A year? Perhaps to the people in Newforth it might seem a short time since he had left; but to *him*, who had undergone so much in the interim, it seemed as if ages had rolled over his head.

And now Mr. Leslie approached him, with some slight hesitation, and told him that the house had been newly done up, and a little of the furniture altered, and that it was now to go with the vicarage.

And, indeed, the house had been transformed. In place of worn carpets and dingy papers there were large squares of Axminster carpet, and handsomely decorated walls; while everything, though perfectly plain, was most thoroughly good.

But when Mr. Manley entered his study, it astonished him. The ecclesiastical decorator and Mrs. Vincent, between them, had managed to satisfy his critical taste most completely. He was delighted with it. The walls were beautiful, and on them hung a few very choice prints. There was only one ornament in the room, a handsome clock mounted in bronze; but the whole impression given was of the greatest comfort, combined with a certain severely clerical air, which was just what Mr. Manley wished. He expressed himself as much pleased.

"But," he said, "although I will not be so ungracious as to hint that so very handsome a present to the vicarage and to me is unnecessary, still, I cannot but tell you that since I have arrived in England I have been left a good deal of money; therefore I think I ought to pay some proportion of the heavy expenses you have all incurred."

However, Mr. Leslie declared this would affront every one, and the Vicar sacrificed his own inclination.

"As to your money," said Mr. Leslie, "I know how it would have been if we had not furnished your house. You would have gone into all the back slums, and provided every one with comforts, and furnished his or her house for him or her, and then you would have said, 'As all the money is spent, I will make the old furniture do until next year;' and next year it would have been just the same."

"You are mistaken," said the Vicar, not caring to argue the point further.

It was now time for him to preside at the tea for the poor people, which he did, and spoke a few kind words to each one present.

And then, as it was nearly eight, he prepared to go to the banquet, and would have walked thither had not a carriage come for him, and with a request that he would drive. It was not sent solely to do him honor, but to insure his not arriving until every one was there to receive him. But the Vicar had far too much sense of fitness to have intended arriving until eight o'clock. The room was quite full when he entered, with that easy grace which always characterized him, and looking as serene as if he had never left them. A well-bred man never shows to better advantage than in facing a similar ordeal, a half-bred man never to worse. Lord Hilton came forward at once, saying: "We are all delighted to see you, Mr. Manley."

Captain Vincent next shook hands, and said, "I have the very greatest pleasure in welcoming you on your return."

Then came the mayor, putting out a broad, fat, and slightly moist hand, which he closed round the cool, white hand of the Vicar, saying, "Glad to see you again, sir—I tell you for the second time; and we are all sorry we were a bit 'asty before you left."

Mr. Manley smiled, and bowed slightly, thinking it best to ignore the unwelcome allusion altogether.

But Admiral Hatton stood somewhat aloof, looking very uncomfortable. To him the Vicar advanced, saying, in his kindest voice, "I trust, sir, that you, too, will shake hands with me."

"To be sure," returned the Admiral, greatly relieved and gratified. "You are a thorough good fellow, Manley, and I hope we shall be as good friends as ever."

Then Mr. Fortescue advanced, and in a very few but well-chosen words expressed his satisfaction at seeing him.

After him came every one, till the Vicar, though still preserving his kind expression, began to devoutly wish that he might wash his hands, or, at all events, his right hand.

The serious business of the banquet then began; and as he found himself *the* honored guest, and listened to the speeches made in his favor, he could not but think of that night when, in that self-same room, he had stood on the platform and faced his enemies. Where were his enemies now? Then, as he looked at the table appointments—the brilliant silver, the glass, the flowers, the china, all of the best—he could not but recall the vision of that solitary man living in the bush, and think of what *his* table appointments had been, how disgusting *his* food.

The brass band had performed during dinner, bringing more than one smile to the Vicar's countenance, and causing Mr. Fortescue, who was enjoying the whole thing immensely, to remark that he had not had such a musical treat for many a long day.

In acknowledging the honor done him, Mr. Manley said but a very

few words. It was not that his former ready speech had forsaken him—it was that he felt, for every one's sake, that the less said the better; and, in addition, he was greatly moved at all the kindness showered on him.

“I'm afraid his head will be turned after this. I never saw such a unanimous ovation given to any clergyman in my life,” said one gentleman; “it will be a great pity if he becomes spoiled in consequence.”

But in all Newforth, in all the county, there was not a man who felt so humble in the depths of his heart as did the Vicar. To be overrated has anything but an exhilarating effect on some minds; he imagined that he was overrated.

“If they could only know me as I am,” he thought, sadly, “as I was”—and his mind reverted to that terrible night in the bush—“and to think that such an one as I is considered worthy of so much praise and honor!”

At eleven o'clock the banquet broke up. Now, at last, he was free to follow the wish of his heart, and see his church. He walked up and down the vicarage garden for a few moments in order to collect his thoughts. He watched the sea, bathed in calm, sweet moonlight; the distant shipping, looking dark against the light; and he said to himself, “Why should any one require to think of more than this: ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. . . . And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: *He made the stars also.*’”

He looked at the steeple—the now finished and handsome steeple—which he could see plainly in the glorious harvest moonlight. His heart swelled within him as he noted how beautiful the church now looked—*his* church. And then he resolved that he would ever after give largely towards missions, and try to help, by every means in his power, those men who gave, not one year, but their lives, to such arduous, disheartening toil.

He walked through the churchyard, and in passing by the graves observed that cross which Ethel had pointed out, bearing the inscription, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life;” but of Ethel he would not think now. The clock chimed half-past eleven when he entered the church; and then his heart became too full for utterance, as he walked up the aisle (for he had entered at the west door), when he saw the well-remembered pulpit, the beautiful chancel, the glorious window. He went to the altar-rails and knelt down, leaning his head on his hands, and there he remained until he heard the chimes, and the clock struck twelve. Then he rose and went home, his heart full of thankfulness and peace—the peace of God.

CHAPTER L.

ETHEL'S RETURN.

THE Hatton family were all agreed now that Ethel should come home. In the first place, on her own account; in the second, on theirs; in the third, in case, by any accident, matters might be set right between her and the Vicar, though on this point none of the family had much hope. He had been very friendly with them, and had asked, in an apparently unconcerned manner, how Miss Ethel was.

Now, Ethel had implored her sister to give her the fullest news of the Vicar on his return, and she was specially to mention whether he said anything about her. This cool mention of her, which Miss Hatton thought it advisable to repeat, in order that inadmissible hope might not revive in her sister's heart, was to Ethel absolutely crushing. Her love now seemed to overwhelm her; she felt that she should like to throw herself at his feet, and beg him to forgive her, and love her again; but this she knew she could not do. But see him again she must and would, and was about to write and say she would like to return home, when, quite unexpectedly, her father arrived on the scene.

She was in the underground dining-room, cutting bread-and-butter for the children's tea; for they required as much waiting on as ever, and were far more exacting in their demands since they found she had not sufficient spirit to resist them. The room was comfortless, as usual; the furniture more worn; the carpet in a still further advanced state of decay, it being almost impossible to tread without being tripped up by a hole. The tablecloth was smeared with treacle, while the food and crockery-ware were much about the same as when she first arrived.

She stood with her back to the window. Admiral Hatton, from the pavement, looked in. He noted the appearance of the room, and, catching sight of Ethel's profile, saw how pale and thin she had grown. He saw the youngest child put her hand into the plate of bread-and-butter, and seize four pieces together. Ethel took three of them away, when the child put up her hand and gave her a slap on the face.

The Admiral waited to see no more; he knocked at the door with a thundering noise, and, pushing past the servant, went into the apology for a drawing-room, where Mrs. Parker was sitting, in a towering rage. Without any preface he burst out, "And what do you *mean* by treating my daughter in this way?"

Then, going to the top of the kitchen-stairs, he roared out, "Come up, Ethel, my girl; I'm here to see you."

She turned very white, and ran up-stairs into his arms, and burst out crying. Her tears increased her father's rage against his sister. As soon as he had kissed his daughter, he turned round again to Mrs. Parker, who was looking frightened and bewildered.

"What's the *meaning* of my coming here, and finding my daughter treated like this?" he asked.

"Like what?" said Mrs. Parker, feebly. "I am sure Ethel has had a very comfortable home here."

"*What?*" thundered the Admiral; "a comfortable home? The daughter of a *British admiral* to be made a slave of and struck by the wretched children of a mean, miserable, pettifogging tradesman!"

"I'm sure I wish the children to behave properly," said Mrs. Parker, deprecatingly; "and you knew she came here to be useful."

"Perhaps to be useful to *you*," retorted the Admiral, "but not to be useful to your dirty, disgusting little wretches of children."

"Don't say quite so much," whispered Ethel, who was endeavoring to check her tears; "you will make aunt ill."

"I can't help that," he replied. "Go up-stairs at once, and pack up, Ethel; for I'll not leave this house until I take you with me."

"Go home now?" said Ethel, beginning to cry again, for during the last few months she had been considerably overwrought.

"Dry your eyes, my girl, and go up-stairs to pack up at once," he repeated.

"Are you going to take Ethel away?" asked Mrs. Parker, now seriously concerned. "I don't know how I can get on without her."

"You should have treated her better," he replied; "and as I don't feel at all anxious to remain in your company, I will go up-stairs and see her pack."

He called the servant and asked her to show him the way up, quite ignoring his nephew and nieces, who were clustered on the stairs, quarrelling at intervals. But when the bedroom was reached his wrath knew no bounds.

"You to have slept in such a hole of a place as *this!*" he exclaimed, and, without paying the slightest heed to the presence of the servant, commenced to abuse his sister without mercy.

Ethel in vain endeavored to check him.

"You know, father," she said, gently, "how very poor aunt is; she couldn't help the furniture being so wretched."

But now the servant-maid joined in. Many had been the small kindnesses Ethel had shown, many the small presents she had made her, and had at last quite won her heart by her gentle words.

"I'm sure, sir," she exclaimed, "it's just about time Miss Ethel *should* go, though I don't know what we shall do without her. She has been that put upon by missus that, if you could only 'a known it, it would make your blood bile." (Ethel sincerely hoped her father's temperature would be raised no higher.) And then Jane entered into a very full and complete catalogue of Ethel's woes—the latter in vain trying to silence her—enlarging on everything, until the Admiral looked as if he were going to have a fit of apoplexy.

"I have even seen her, by missus's orders, try to brush up the settin'-room, sir, though I must say she did it uncommon bad, and all Miss Ethel says to her aggravations and orders was, 'Yes,' as mild as milk."

"Jane," said Ethel, gravely, "I request you to be silent."

"Well, I will, miss," answered Jane, who had now said about as much as it was possible to condense into ten minutes in the way of grievances; "and I won't stay in this blessed place, now you are going."

"Here's a sovereign for you, my girl," said the Admiral; "and now cord and strap Miss Ethel's trunks, and then fetch a cab, and we'll be out of this before ten minutes are over."

When the cab arrived he would not see his sister, but walked straight out of the house. Ethel, however, went in and kissed her and the children, and said a few kind words.

"Ah," said Jane, as they departed, "now you'll find out the value of Miss Ethel, ma'am; it's a pity you couldn't 'ave found it out afore."

But Mrs. Parker was too much subdued just now to reply.

In going to Victoria Station the Admiral observed with what interest Ethel looked at all the great public buildings.

"Why," he said, good-humoredly, "any one would think you hadn't seen them since you were in London."

"Neither have I, father," returned Ethel, quietly. "You know I went to nurse my aunt, not to enjoy myself."

"Your aunt be—" he was on the point of adding "hanged," but checked himself, as he remembered, after all, how helpless his sister was. He thought that after Gertrude was married, in November, he could afford to give Mrs. Parker some small sum a year.

"Did you never go anywhere?" he asked.

"I went to church—when I could."

"Oh, ho! so even *that* was too great a luxury to be allowed you; it's outrageous—it's disgraceful."

As the train neared Newforth, Ethel's heart beat fast. She caught sight of the spire, and of the vicarage behind the church, and, for the millionth time, wondered at her own folly in having lost faith in the Vicar. She wondered whether she should ever meet him except in church; and, if so, what he would say to her. But as the cab that brought them from the station drew up at their door she caught sight of his well-known form coming down the road. She opened the door of the cab herself, and flew into the house, shutting the dining-room door behind her, as if she feared she were pursued.

Mrs. and Miss Hatton received her with astonishment and delight.

"But what is the matter, Ethel?" asked Miss Hatton. "You look like a ghost."

Meantime Admiral Hatton had also caught sight of Mr. Manley, and, entirely forgetting that he had ever been engaged to Ethel, he poured out to him the entire catalogue of her wrongs, delighted to find a silent listener.

The Vicar's face became graver and graver as the Admiral proceeded, the delicacy of feeling natural to him telling him that he ought to have been the last person to hear this story.

"I trust Miss Ethel's health has not suffered," he said, very courteously, but very gravely, and in the same tone that he would have employed if speaking of Mrs. Allen.

And then it suddenly dawned on the Admiral that this man was at one time to have been Ethel's husband, and he bade him "good-bye" somewhat confusedly.

"I have been telling Manley all about your treatment, Ethel," he said, as he joined the others in the dining-room.

"I think you might have spared me *that*," said Ethel, turning crimson, and going out of the room.

"The child is ill; that's what's the matter," said the Admiral. "Now, what on earth was there to take offence at in what I said?" and then he recommenced the tale of Ethel's wrongs and hardships, to Mrs. Hatton's unbounded indignation.

The Vicar walked on, lost in thought. It was one thing to say in the bush that he seldom thought of her, but quite another to say so in Newforth, where everything constantly reminded him of her, and of their former love. Even his window brought her to his recollection, not with the love of old, but with a feeling which he tried hard should not be bitterness.

Such a man as he never yet loved lightly, never forgot lightly. So now this account of the life she had been leading moved him more than he cared to show; but, as he had resolved in the train, so he now determined that he would act towards her in every respect as if she were any other young lady. And yet he was anxious to see her once again, although he was scarcely conscious of the wish. He found himself looking out of the vicarage windows, and wondering whether she would go by; but, during the first few days of her home-coming Ethel did not go beyond the garden. She longed to see him, and yet dreaded to do so.

Now, concerning these same windows there was a great talk made among the young ladies, as they overlooked the main road. Mrs. Leslie usually went to church alone in the afternoon, but on returning was often joined by some friend who had also been to the service.

On one occasion Miss Allen, Miss Hatton, and Captain Worsley met her coming from the church door.

"You are going down the wrong way," she said to Miss Allen; "this is our nearest road home."

"Oh," returned Miss Allen, "I don't like going that way; it takes you past the vicarage windows."

"If I wanted to go past the vicarage windows one hundred and fifty times, it being my most direct road, I should go," said Mrs. Leslie. "*First* of all, I haven't the slightest idea whether the Vicar usually sits in the back or the front of the house, as he has a sitting-room in both; and if I did know I should not care; *secondly*, if I did go, I should be quite sure that he had a great many more

things to do than to look at me; and, *thirdly*, if it pleased him to look at the passers-by, why shouldn't he do so?"

"Hear, hear," said Captain Worsley; "quite a sermon, Mrs. Leslie."

"It's very well for you," said Miss Allen; "you are married, so people can't say anything; but after all the disgusting paragraphs about young ladies, in the papers, it makes us uncomfortable."

"I dare say it does," returned Mrs. Leslie, laughing. "I really do feel for all you girls, but if you want to get your minds *really* from dwelling so much on him as they evidently do, work him up into a novel, and make three volumes of him. You will then look on him—except, of course, in church—as a mere abstraction, a species of anatomical study."

Captain Worsley laughed heartily.

"Or I will tell you what will be better still, Miss Allen," he said. "Go down to a naval and military town, such as Portsmouth, and you will find there are such hosts of men that one vicar, more or less, won't be of the slightest consequence."

"I beg your pardon, Harry," said Miss Hatton; "when I was in Portsmouth there was a vicar in Southsea who was of the most tremendous importance to *every* one, and was most heartily liked. Why, you know perfectly well that you were there at the time, before you went out to Africa, and were as jealous of him as you could possibly be, although I only spoke to him once in my life, just because I praised him. You used to say that you couldn't bear the sound of his name."

"I wasn't engaged then; you used to snub me so awfully, you know; I am now, so I don't care."

"And is that vicar there still?" asked Mrs. Leslie.

"Yes," replied Captain Worsley, looking highly amused; "but he is—married, alas!"

"There is Mr. Manley now," said Mrs. Leslie, "let us stop and speak to him."

Somewhat to her chagrin Miss Hatton repeated the speech about the abstraction he would become. But he did not appear at all offended; he laughed and said he much preferred to be looked upon in the light of an abstraction than to be the subject of too much regard.

Miss Allen suddenly shook hands and went away.

"I wish you would not give those neat little hits, Mr. Manley," said Miss Hatton; "because, although they are very telling, they are done so amiably, which makes them harder to bear."

"What hit?" he asked, with a smile. "I merely said I did not wish to be the subject of too much regard, and I *don't* wish it, neither I suppose does any one else. I made a general statement—that was all."

"Miss Allen took it personally."

Now, Miss Allen was hugely tall, red-haired, and freckled, and withal, very cross-looking. Although usually reticent, she occasionally came out with very snappish remarks, and was altogether no favorite with the Vicar.

"I am sorry for Miss Allen, if so," he replied. "I intended nothing personal to her. I looked on all this conversation as the reverse of serious."

"I am so glad you can see a joke," said Miss Hatton, "which is more than Mr. Rowen could do."

"Poor Mr. Rowen!" said the Vicar, leaving them.

He turned down a side road, and there, coming towards him, within a few feet, was—Ethel.

At the sight of her pale, but now very beautiful face, he felt a great rush of feeling come over him, and he knew that it would be impossible for him to stop and speak a friendly and indifferent greeting, as he had intended.

So he passed on, looking her full in the face very gravely, and bowing so low that she saw the whole of the lining of his hat.

So *this* was the greeting she received from the man she loved better than all the world. The tears came into her eyes; she felt utterly heart-broken. If he had cut her, if he had nodded to her, if he had given her one smile such as he was wont to bestow on the poorest of his parishioners, it would have been, oh, so much better than this courteous, stately greeting. What could she do? She would not force herself upon him, and speak to him against his will; she could not send him any message; she could not write to him; there was nothing in her power. From the man who had held her in his arms as if he could not bear to let her go, she had received—a distant bow.

But she had no idea of the conflicting emotions in *his* mind. He loved her still, he fully acknowledged this now; but with a very different love to the trusting, perfect love of the old time. He loved her and—well, not despised her; that word would ill express the feeling in his mind—but while he loved her, he pitied her as one in whose affection there was no trust. As for making her his wife now, such an idea did not even occur to him. Marry a girl who had forsaken him during his worst trouble? Oh, no!

CHAPTER LI.

VAIN REGRET.

THE parish machinery was in full force, the Vicar's firm hand was felt in every department. In vain did some of the ladies try to make themselves too prominent; in vain did the organist try to retain his privileges with regard to the hymns, and the choir to the music and chants; in vain did the verger, who had a little forgotten his respect, for a brief moment, try to give his opinion. With a smile, and a few determined words, which, withal, seemed to annoy no one, the Vicar showed them all that he was master, and intended to be master. Every one was ten times better pleased. In place of twenty chiefs, there was now but one.

A new curate was appointed, a Mr. Chasemore; and as he was not only a very good man, but a married man, there was no difficulty with him and the ladies. But Mr. Manley did not give him a hundred a year; he gave him two hundred and fifty pounds a year, and many a fee that by rights belonged to the Vicar found its way into the curate's hands, on the plea of his extra trouble. They worked together most harmoniously; for Mr. Chasemore had the most thorough belief in, and admiration for, his Vicar.

Mr. Manley had paid a short visit to Templemore, and thanked Mrs. Vincent most heartily for the peal of bells, and had a good laugh over their names, which he allowed were somewhat peculiar.

"And what shall you call the others, Mr. Manley?" asked Mrs. Vincent.

"Really I have not thought of it," he replied. "Perhaps some Australian name."

"Oh, please don't do that," she rejoined, promptly; "because, as my husband's and my names are there with yours, we should not like to be mixed up with outlandish-sounding Australian places."

Had she given her real reason, it would have been her hope that Mr. Manley would one day marry, and call the remaining bells by his wife's names.

"You have the best right to name them," he said; "why do you not do so?"

"Shall we agree that you are to do so before the year is over?"

"As you please," he replied, thinking that it was quite immaterial to him by what names they were called.

And here it may be remarked, in parenthesis, that before the year was over he *had* named them, and that the names that they bore were then by no means immaterial to him.

About this time he received letters from Mr. Philpot and Mr. Groves, telling him they were in London. He at once wrote and gave them a cordial invitation, which they gladly accepted, coming down without delay. The Vicar made no change in his usual mode of life for their presence; he went about his work the same as usual. Sometimes of an evening he would ask them to sit with him in his study—an honor he seldom had been known to accord to any, save people who came on business.

Now this same study was his delight. The church decorator and Mrs. Vincent between them had succeeded marvellously in pleasing him. Although, from conscientious scruples, he would not have spent money on giving himself æsthetic pleasure, still, now that it was provided for him, he greatly enjoyed it, and would have looked on himself as very ungracious had he professed to undervalue the attraction his pretty house now had for him.

"You only want a wife to make the place perfect," said Mr. Groves, who had been warm in his expressions of pleasure at everything he had seen.

"I think," replied Mr. Manley, "that I do not want a wife," and a momentary expression of gravity came over his countenance.

Ethel he had not met once since their first *rencontre*. She scrupu-

lously avoided him. She now sat in a seat at the extreme end of the church, accompanied by her sister and Captain Worsley, who always came over from Saturday to Monday. She thought the Vicar could not possibly see her; she sat as far back as she could, and often covered her face with her hand. Her grief seemed too heavy for her when she saw his grave, earnest face full of so much light and feeling. As often as not the tears would stand in her eyes during the entire service, sometimes run down her cheeks.

"You must wear a veil in church, Ethel," said her sister; "it looks so, to see you so often crying."

But to Ethel just then looks were nothing; there was only to her one person in church, and that was—the Vicar. As for parish work, she made no attempt at that; she knew that she could not face him.

But one day, after showing Mr. Groves and Mr. Philpot the way to Fisherman's Cove, Mr. Manley was slowly returning by the beach, and, on walking round one of the small indented bays, he came face to face with—Ethel. She was standing on the sand, her mind evidently far away from the visible scene, although the tide was tumbling and splashing almost at her feet. But this time he did not bow and pass on. With a grave face he held out his hand, saying, "How do you do—Miss Ethel?"

The slight pause spoke volumes. "Miss Ethel!" Had it come to that? A vivid flood of crimson overspread her face, which departed, leaving her deadly pale; but she could find no words in which to reply. He appeared not to perceive her agitation; he spoke a few words of inquiry after her father and mother, and, coldly averting his eyes, he then wished her good-bye, holding her hand as if he certainly did *not* mean it.

That her case was hopeless she now fully realized, and after this she met him often; but although he fully intended to be courteous and friendly to her, as he was to all the other young ladies, he did not carry out his wishes. He could be, and was, polite—oh, so polite; but he was always cold, always dignified, always unapproachable. As she looked at him, she would think it almost an impossibility that she should ever have put her arms round his neck, have kissed him, have called him "Phil." This man appeared like some grand, but quite un-come-at-able being. He would gladly have avoided these meetings, but it was not possible that he should, and, knowing this, he had begun to look upon them as a necessary but painful duty.

CHAPTER LII.

A SUBSTITUTE.

MRS. LESLIE and Miss Hatton were on their way from the usual fortnightly working-party, which on this occasion had been held at Mrs. Chasemore's, when they met young Mr. Allen.

Now these working-parties were productive of real good, inasmuch as, by the sale of their work, the ladies realized a considerable sum in the course of the year; but it cannot be said that they were amusing, although it must be added that not one of the ladies went for the sake of amusement. The Vicar was not quite certain whether the ladies of Newforth had minds or not, judging by the nature of the conversation with which they, one and all, without exception, favored him; still, he was willing to give them the benefit of the doubt, and, in case it should be decided in their favor, he thought he would try and improve such intellect as they might possess. He accordingly signified his wish that the books chosen for reading at the working-party should be of a grave nature—historical works, or pamphlets on the questions of the day. It is quite possible that, had he been present, and read them himself, a fair amount of interest might have been excited in them; but, as it was, these books, often read far from impressively, were productive of a most depressing influence on the minds of the poor ladies.

On this afternoon the work selected had been a little sort of blue-book affair, in favor of the Channel Tunnel.

Now, Mrs. Leslie detested the idea of the Channel Tunnel, and had she not done so before, the prolonged reading would certainly have made her. She put down her work every five minutes, and yawned surreptitiously. Before the book was ended, she abhorred the Channel Tunnel.

The reading began slowly, and gradually increased in pace as the welcome clatter of the cups was heard outside, for tea and cake were always served before the working-party broke up; and when the book was put down a perceptible sigh of relief went through the room.

"I wonder how Mr. Manley would like to be made to listen to what he had previously read at home," said Miss Allen; "*I* have read every word of that before."

"It does not the least matter if you have," returned Miss Hatton; "if the Vicar says 'Channel Tunnel,' 'Channel Tunnel' it will be, and we might as well make the best of it. I allow I would much rather hear something of Thackeray's."

"You have lost your authority since Mr. Rowen went away," said Miss Allen. "No taking command of district meetings for you now."

"I am very glad to lose it," said Miss Hatton, "and I vastly prefer that the Vicar should be the head, as, of course, he always ought to be."

It was after this meeting that Mr. Allen joined them.

"Do you know," he said, "that there is going to be a meeting of the Young Men's Christian Association in three days' time? Are you going?"

"Certainly not," returned Miss Hatton. "I went on one occasion, and I have never forgotten it. Nothing would make me go to another."

"I am sure that you will go to this one," he returned, "and probably will bring Captain Worsley."

"Why?"

"Because the Vicar is going to give the address himself, and detail his own experience in the bush."

"That quite alters the case," said Miss Hatton. "Of course we will go."

"We will all go," said Mrs. Leslie.

The appointed evening came; it was the day before that arranged for the departure of Mr. Groves and Mr. Philpot, which Mr. Manley had fully taken into consideration. In place of empty benches, the room was crowded in every part; there was scarcely standing-room.

The Vicar began his address with a smile, which gradually left his face as he described the sad and degraded condition of the heathen black tribe among whom his lot had been cast. His expression became very sad as he, in graphic, stirring words, described how little he had been able to do for them, how little to accomplish, but how sure he felt that more *might* be done with time and patience. He told them of the sort of food he had eaten, and the manner in which it had been prepared, neither softening nor exaggerating any detail; of the toil he had endured, and how hard he had felt it to continue his labor underneath the burning sun.

Interesting in the extreme as the lecture was, a slight feeling of astonishment began to pervade the audience. Never within their memory had the Vicar been known to so much as allude to any sacrifice he had made, no matter of what nature. What was the meaning of this? And now, on continuing his narration, he told them of how the blacks had burned his hut, of his journey through the thirty miles of bush land, of his illness, and of how nearly he had died.

Then he spoke of the manner in which he had been found, of the attention, the very great kindness, he had received from total strangers. "And *these*," he continued, pointing to Mr. Groves and Mr. Philpot, who at once wished the earth would open and swallow them up—"these were the Good Samaritans who brought me on my way, and tended and cared for me. To them I owe my life, and a large debt of gratitude." (Great applause, prolonged applause, from the Christian Young Men.)

Mr. Philpot and Mr. Groves looked round, but, seeing no way of escape open, thought better of it, and remained in their chairs.

"But it is not for the purpose of thanking these gentlemen that I have called this meeting, and addressed you personally. Why have I told you of the hard life a missionary in the bush must necessarily endure?"

No answer was received to this question. Mr. Leslie, who had supported the Vicar, said under his breath that he supposed it was to throw cold water on missions.

The Vicar looked round, his face glowing.

"I have told you all this, my dear friends, because I want to know '*Who will go out in my place?*'"

Not a soul in the room was prepared for *this* finish to the highly interesting story.

"I am quite sure that I won't," said Mr. Leslie, in an aside.

Now, the intention the Vicar had long had was this. He was not a man who was too proud to acknowledge it, if he had made a mistake; and he was now of opinion that Mr. Yorke had been, to a certain extent, right, in what he had said as to the aborigines not being like children. He had come to the conclusion that perhaps a man whose organization was not so fine, nor his perceptions so delicate, *would* be better fitted to undertake the life, for the reason that many minor points regarding the customs of the natives, which would be exceedingly distressing to a highly-refined man, would perhaps fail to wound a lower and coarser nature.

Therefore he was quite prepared to pay the entire cost of fitting out and training one of these young men of lower birth, who perhaps might volunteer to go out, as he said, in his place. For it still seemed to him, in some way, as if he himself owed a debt towards missions, as if he had in some way failed in his duty by quitting his work there; and this he thought would be the best and wisest manner of discharging his obligations.

Some conversation took place among the young men. It seemed as if none of them would come forward, when, to the unbounded surprise of every one in the room, including the Vicar, young Mr. Allen came forward, and said that he had been so much impressed by all he had heard, that he had quite made up his mind that *he* would go.

His mother exclaimed in horror, and there would probably have ensued a scene which would have caused some amusement, had not Mr. Manley interposed.

"We will talk about this to-morrow, Mr. Allen, if you please," he said, quietly. "Will you be good enough to come to the vicarage at ten o'clock to-morrow morning?" And then, turning to a gentleman near him, he requested him, before the meeting broke up, to give the pre-arranged statement of the accounts.

It may well be believed that poor Mrs. Allen was horrified and grieved. That her only and darling son should go out to a place such as they had heard described was not to be borne. She argued, she entreated, she implored, she threatened, but her son turned a

deaf ear. The fact was, the young man had a great deal of good in him, and he was beginning to see that the life he was now leading was being the ruin of him. When Mr. Manley had first come to Newforth he had taken a great interest in all the young men, both gentlemen and others, knowing full well that their temptations are far greater than those of young women, and, not only so, but that, as a rule, their inclinations do not take a religious turn nearly so often as women's.

But when Mr. Rowen had been Vicar he had had no influence whatever with most of the young men. They had so much admired Mr. Manley's vigor and pluck and determination and strength, so cordially liked his genial words, that they ended by accepting all his good advice without question, and were considerably led by him. Therefore, when they found that Mr. Rowen could take part in neither swimming nor athletic game of any description, they ended, most unjustly, by putting him down as a milk-and-water sort of man, without a particle of backbone, whose good advice was not even worth listening to.

There was no doubt that Mr. Rowen was not fairly judged. Had he come immediately after the old Vicar, Mr. Smith, he would have been properly estimated, and probably much liked; but, coming after Mr. Manley, he was always compared with the latter, and always to his own disparagement. Mr. Manley had gone over to see him in his country parish, and had found him comfortable enough. He was actually his own master, and had only seen one lady since he had been in his parish!

After this digression, we must return to young Mr. Allen. At ten o'clock punctually he presented himself at the vicarage. The Vicar had been seeing Mr. Philpot and Mr. Groves off, and had only just returned from the station.

"I am glad to see you," he said, genially; "and now that you have slept on your resolution, do you still hold to it?"

"Yes, sir," said the young man, heartily. "The only thing against it is that my mother declares I shall kill her."

"I should not wish you to grieve your mother," Mr. Manley replied, gravely. "Perhaps it would be right that you should give up your own desire."

"But I assure you, sir," said Mr. Allen, with vehemence, "that if I don't go somewhere, or do something, I shall soon go to the dogs."

"*That* is not the spirit in which to undertake so important a work as mission work," replied the Vicar, still looking very grave.

"That is not the only reason, Mr. Manley," said young Allen. "I have always felt a great interest in those sort of fellows—niggers and natives of all sorts. I know I am of no use in England—I haven't much brains, and couldn't pass a competitive examination to save my life; but I think I might do *them* some good. Anyhow, I would try. I am very strong, and I like roughing it, and, as I should only go out as a lay helper, I could return if I didn't like it."

"There is a great deal of reason in what you say," replied Mr. Manley; "but I am sorry that your mother should be pained. At present I scarcely know how to advise you; I must take time to consider."

"But there is still another reason," urged the young man, reddening slightly, "why I can't and won't stay in Newforth."

"What is that?"

"Ethel Hatton refused me yesterday," he answered, sheepishly.

This was very unexpected news to the Vicar, who, on his part, scarcely felt his usual composure. But he concealed any appearance of undue interest, and said he had not been aware that Mr. Allen had been paying her attention.

"It was in this way," said the young man, who had lost his shyness now, and seemed pleased to speak on the subject. "I was in love with her long before she was engaged to you."

Mr. Manley thought this remark was in somewhat questionable taste, but he said nothing.

"Of course," continued Mr. Allen, "as soon as I heard that you liked her, I knew that it was all up with me, so I held my tongue. Then, when your engagement was broken off, I still said nothing, because it wasn't in reason that, after having liked *you*, she should look at *me*, and I let her go off to London without saying a word. When she came back, looking so white and sad, I would have given anything to have told her I loved her, and would like to take care of her; but I thought you would come forward, and so it would be of no use."

The Vicar set his mouth somewhat sternly.

"So," said Mr. Allen, "I tried to make the best of it, although I saw every day how much more miserable she was looking. Why, do you know, Mr. Manley, that sometimes I have seen her cry half the service."

"I do not know it. And, pray, what took *you* to the bottom of the church, Mr. Allen?" he added, with more sharpness than was at all necessary.

"I went so that I could sit near her," replied the young man, humbly.

"I beg your pardon," said the Vicar, quietly. "Go on with your story."

"Well, yesterday, I was going along the road, and I thought I saw her in front of me. I wasn't at all sure, so I did not walk any faster, but just strolled along for another mile or so. Suddenly she disappeared. I was near the wood, so I thought she must have gone in there. I didn't see anything of her, and was just going out again, when in the distance I caught sight of her white dress, down one of the narrow paths. I went to the spot, and there she was, sitting down, and sobbing as if her heart would break."

"And what then?" asked the Vicar, sternly.

"Oh," returned the young man, simply, "I just went on my knees to her, and begged and implored her to be my wife."

Again the Vicar thought this very questionable taste; he knew

that *he* could not so have intruded on the grief of a girl who did not love him; but again he held his peace.

"But," said Mr. Allen, "she would not have anything to say to me. She left off crying, yet all she would say to me was that she was very sorry, but that if I asked her for a year, she would not marry me. And I know she meant it."

There was a slight pause; the Vicar turned seawards, and apparently was watching some fishing-boats in the distance.

Young Mr. Allen hesitated slightly, and then, with the courage born of desperation, said, "Mr. Manley, she is miserable about *you*; why don't you ask her again to marry you?"

The Vicar turned round and looked at him—looked until Mr. Allen felt not only crushed, but absolutely and completely annihilated.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered.

But still the Vicar looked, until Mr. Allen exclaimed, in despair, "I can't stand this; I must go."

Seeing he was prepared to make a run for the gate, Mr. Manley turned away, and then, with a smile, said, "I think we will not bring my name into the conversation just yet. Suppose we return to the subject of your going abroad."

Long and patiently did he explain to the young man the difficulties he would have to encounter; but Mr. Allen was nothing daunted. He said he had plenty of money to spend, and if he went to London now he should go to rack and ruin; he would far rather spend his money in doing some good. So at last it was decided that he should go, and the Vicar gave him every information as to how to set about it.

CHAPTER LIII.

AN UNEXPECTED RENCONTRE.

It may well be imagined that Mr. Manley had not gone into the history of his bush life without recalling vividly to his own mind the memory of that terrible night spent under the eucalyptus. His humility had never deserted him; still he thought he should like to put some test as to the feelings of others.

"If I, their spiritual head, have thus failed, how often may they not have done so?" he said to himself.

So he revolved the matter in his mind, and at last thought that he would, by direct questioning, ascertain on what grounds some of the members of his congregation's faith rested. Therefore he selected a Mrs. Gray, a person whom he considered, as far as he could judge, one of the least religious among his people. He called on her, and, after some unimportant conversation, said, "Mrs. Gray, have you ever been troubled with any doubts as to the absolute truth of the Christian religion, as we teach it in the Church of England?"

"Doubts?" she replied, in amazement. "Certainly not; I have never doubted anything."

Now the Vicar did not consider at the time that the citadel that has never been assailed cannot well fall. He went home saying to himself, "She whom I have judged has stood firmer than I," and something of his old feeling came over him. But not for long. He knew that it was not expedient that he should remember those things that were behind.

The news that he had heard from Mr. Allen greatly disturbed him. He thought of Ethel sitting sobbing alone, and he remembered the time when, if she had been in grief, he would have been the first to comfort her; now, he could comfort every one in the parish before her.

With regard to Mr. Allen, he was now fully of opinion that the young man was right to go. He called himself on Mrs. Allen, and endeavored to make her see it in the same light, and his words had some weight; she promised she would try to think better of the scheme. He was to defray his own expenses entirely; on this point the Vicar felt no further responsibility, knowing that the whole of his income might be well spent in his own parish. He much preferred that it should be so; it had only been a sense of duty which had prompted him to pay the expenses of some one else.

And here it may as well be recorded that, being of opinion that what is to be done is best done quickly, he coincided with Mr. Allen in his view that he should depart without any delay; and within two days' time the young man had set out for London, whence he departed shortly for Australia. Let us hope he effected some good.

The Vicar felt greatly troubled. The events of the past year had set their mark on him. It was quite true, as his sister had said, that it was *earthly* joy he wanted. His voice was still beautiful, but it was sterner than of old. He laughed but seldom; he seemed to have lost his old buoyancy of spirits. At times his whole countenance would light up with pleasure; but these were but momentary gleams, which soon departed, leaving his face grave, though kind.

The day after that on which Mr. Allen had spoken to him he walked out on the high-road towards Fisherman's Cove. He had no purpose in selecting that route; his choice was quite unpremeditated. He was thinking of the Hatton family, of the courtesy and deference the old Admiral had shown him since his return, the kindness extended to him by Mrs. Hatton, the invariable warmth of greeting from Gertrude, whose marriage would now take place shortly; and then he thought of Ethel—thought of her until he reached the Cove.

He paid his usual visits, thinking, as he did so, of the first day on which he had gone thither. There were the same boats drawn up on the beach, the crab and lobster baskets scattered about, the fishermen in their bright-colored jerseys, the waves dancing and flashing in the sunlight; but he—was he the same man who had leaped over the rocks in the gladness of his heart? He knew that he was not.

He thought of his many visits to Mrs. Stevens's house, when his

sister and her erring husband had lived there. He thought of the evil they had wrought against him; but he felt no bitterness against them, he had forgiven them from his heart. He had forgiven every one. On his first arrival he had made a point of going round to every household where they had misjudged him, both rich and poor, and extending to them the hand of friendship. He had especially done so to the man whom he had been on the point of knocking down—the man who had told him that the pot should not call the kettle black—and this very man had made him a genuine and spontaneous apology.

In all the world there was only one person towards whom he felt any bitterness, and she was the girl he loved.

After listening to Mrs. Stevens's voluble and thrice-told tale as to the finding of the packet of papers, he ascended the cliffs, and, instead of turning into the road, took the cliff path away from Newforth. It was very narrow, running almost at the edge of the cliff; on the other side were fields of corn and crops, divided from the path by clumps of trees, hedges, or small bowlders. It was a matter of some difficulty in certain parts for two people to pass one another. The Vicar looked at the sea, and, cautiously approaching the edge of the cliff, looked over on to the rocks below—the seaweed-covered brown rocks. He took up a large stone, and threw it into the sea; he could hear the splash distinctly, and see the widening circle it made.

After a time he turned his face homewards.

But who was this coming towards him? A young lady, whose head was bent; her eyes were on the ground. He could not mistake that graceful figure; he could have picked it out from among a thousand. He set his determined mouth, and prepared to pass her with a friendly word, when suddenly she raised her eyes, and saw him directly in front of her. Possibility of escape there was none. On her left hand there were the sharp, jagged rocks below; a false step in that direction would precipitate her upon them. On her right hand, between her and the fields, there was a cluster of rocks and bowlders as high as her head. Her heart beat until she thought she could not walk another step. Every vestige of color went out of her face; but still the Vicar advanced, with his firm tread and upright carriage. Her feet seemed to give way under her, and then, without knowing how it happened, her foot stumbled against a stone. She tried to save herself, and fell against the rocks on her right hand, giving her chest a heavy blow. Her previous agitation, combined with the shock, were too much for her; she fainted, and would have fallen, had not the Vicar rushed forward and caught her in his strong arms. He placed her tenderly on the ground, her head on his knee; and as he looked into her white, unconscious, but most beautiful face, a great rush of love came over him. Was it possible she could be dead? He bent his head over her, and pressed his lips to hers, saying, with his whole heart in his voice, "*My darling! Oh, my darling!*"

He continued looking into her face until he saw her eyelids move, when he placed her head gently on the ground, taking off his own hat and placing it underneath her hair. In a moment or two she

had recovered her consciousness completely, and then he said to her, very gently and kindly, but still very distantly, "Are you better, Miss Ethel?"

"Yes," she answered, faintly. "I should like to get up."

"I will help you," he returned.

He put his arm round her shoulders, and lifted her gently on to her feet. Her returning color now flooded her face; she could not look at him.

"Do you think you can walk home?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," she replied, earnestly; "I am sure I can."

"That is well," he returned; "for in this place it would be somewhat difficult to obtain assistance."

"Good-bye," she said, holding out her hand.

He smiled.

"I am not quite so inhuman as to leave you alone in this spot; should you feel giddy you might fall over the cliffs. I shall take you home."

Her heart gave a sudden leap as he held out his arm. She took it; but oh, it was not like taking his arm in former times. She was obliged to walk very close beside him, the path was so very narrow; but he managed to walk just a step in advance, and there seemed quite an interval between them. However narrow the path might have been in former times, they would somehow have walked side by side. He spoke a few friendly words, but his voice sounded cold, and he never once looked at her.

As soon as they reached the high-road, she told him that she was quite well, and could go home alone; but, although he suffered her to let go his arm, he refused to leave her until she was in the lane leading to her father's house, when, with a very courteous and state-ly bow, he went away.

CHAPTER LIV.

REFLECTION.

ON coming down to breakfast the next morning the Vicar found a letter in Ethel's well-known handwriting. He took it up with some slight agitation, for the events of the preceding day had in some degree shaken him. His hand lingered over the envelope before opening it; he tried to feel no expectation of pleasure in the contents. The letter ran thus:

"MY DEAR MR. MANLEY,—I do not know how to begin to write to you; but after your goodness to me yesterday I cannot but beg you, with all my heart, to forgive me for what is past, and to assure you that I have always felt deep sorrow for my distrust of you. I hope you will tell me that you have forgiven me. Believe me to be,

"Your sincere friend,

ETHEL HATTON."

He put down the letter, and pondered over it. It was evident that she had not been entirely unconscious yesterday, but had heard the words he had uttered in bending over her. How else should she have written him this letter?

She had asked him to forgive her. In this case what would forgiveness mean? It would mean nothing less than that he should again ask her to be his wife—again take her to his arms, and his heart. No, he could not do it. He *could* not forget their parting in the woods—his appeal to her, and her reply. He seemed again to hear her words, “*I can’t, Phil; I can’t.* You would be my clergyman as well as my lover, and my faith in you would be gone.” Of all his bitter experience of the past, no one sentence had stung him as had this. Her faith in him had gone, and, though now restored for a time, it might go again.

He would write and tell her he had naught but kindness in his heart towards her, perhaps; but as to making any further overture towards her, that he would not do. And then he asked himself if down in the bottom of his heart he had quite forgiven her, and he decided at length that he had not.

He put the letter in his pocket, making no attempt to answer it that day. He felt restless. He wandered into the church, and out of it again; he paced his garden; he neglected his correspondence. He knew he could not settle down just then to his ordinary work, the letter in his pocket was absorbing all his thoughts. He called his dog and started for a long ramble by the seashore, leaping over the rocks, and throwing stones into the water mechanically. After a time he left the shore, and struck across the cliffs into the woods. Underneath the deepest shadow of the trees he lay down, and remained lost in deepest thought. As heretofore, he saw around him bracken and moss and freshest undergrowth, interspersed with tiny wild-flowers. A glade opened before him; on every side were tall oaks and elms, and large trees of mountain-ash. Through their branches he could discern, in the distance, the blue sea. He took off his hat and placed one hand beneath his head, closing his eyes; but he was not desirous of sleeping.

Over and over again every circumstance of his courtship presented itself to his mind; every circumstance, too, of his exile—that exile which could have been so well borne had she been with him. No, he could not forgive her. He could love her, and did love her; but it was not with the love of the old days; it was with a pitying affection, as to one who was weak.

He could not marry her now, he *would* not marry her. The wife who should be to him a tower of strength, when he needed mental comfort, would not be realized or found in her; therefore he would never marry.

A lonely rook cawed over his head, sailing away to his distant rookery; the birds twittered and chirped on the boughs of the trees around him; a timid rabbit ran almost across his feet. He noted all these things and smiled. He was an intense lover of nature in all her forms; he had the keenest power of appreciating all the varied beauties she displayed.

He called his dog, and looked into his eyes. "*You* haven't forsaken me, old fellow," he said; "you never did forsake me."

Finding by his watch that it was getting late—for in his unusual preoccupation he had taken no heed of the time—he rose and put on his hat, shaking off the leaves and pieces of twigs that had fallen on him. His heart was very sad as he returned to the seashore and walked homewards with a quick step. The water in the rocky pools showed clear and green, it eddied round the rocks; the pebbles shone; the sea sparkled, blue and bright. But the loveliness of the day was taken no heed of by the Vicar; his heart was too sore. He took the usual five-o'clock service, and went home immediately, shutting himself up in his study. He had noted that Ethel was not in church. He spent the evening in reading, but his thoughts perpetually wandered; he could not fix them on his subject.

Towards nine o'clock he again went into the church, and stood looking at the east window—that window which he had shown her before every one. Its beauty attracted him, as it always did; his thoughts for a few moments became absorbed in the subjects. The sun had set, but sufficient light remained to throw out the central figures; and then the Vicar gave a deep sigh and walked home again. No, he could not forgive her, as forgiveness really meant.

At eleven he went up to his room, and, putting out his light, sat at the open window. The moonlight was on the sea, shedding one broad path of silver across it; the shipping was bathed in subdued light. The trees in the garden waved their solemn "good-night;" their boughs almost looked in at his windows. He remembered the moonlight nights abroad—those nights when he had lain down beneath the bare canopy of heaven and contemplated the stars in all their wondrous majesty of beauty. And then he remembered again that night when he too had failed—had, as he thought, erred, had been weak; and a great flood of sorrow came over him. Should he sit in judgment on one who had been weak also? And then it seemed to him a Christlike thing to forgive—to forgive from the lowest depths of his heart.

He put aside all his pride, all his bitterness, all his just resentment, and determined that he would go to Ethel on the morrow, and would ask her to be his wife; more than this, that he would love and cherish her, and ever hide from her the fact that she was no longer in his eyes what she once had been.

CHAPTER LV.

RECONCILIATION.

To Ethel the knowledge that the Vicar still retained his love for her had been strange and marvellous; had been productive of joy too deep for utterance. From the moment of his return until now he had never addressed one word to her except such as formal courtesy demanded, and she remembered the misery she had endured

in thinking that his affections might be transferred to some other woman. But now his words rang in her ears—those words spoken when, for aught he knew, she might have been dead—“My *darling!* Oh, my *darling!*” Would he have spoken them had his love been a thing of the past? She knew that he would not. The fact was almost too incredible; she felt in ecstasy. But then she remembered how, the moment her consciousness had returned, he had withdrawn from her, and had paid her only such attention as kindness and humanity demanded. It was evident she must make her penitence manifest; she was only too thankful to have the opportunity.

She knew that to write to him was, in effect, to ask him to return to her; but, if he loved her, why should she not do so? She posted her letter that evening herself—for the accident had left no trace—and lay awake all night thinking of the morrow. Surely he would come, or, if he did not come, he would write. She dressed herself in her prettiest dress, and sat in the house all day; but he did not come, and he did not write. A great weight of heaviness came over her. He had not forgiven her; he would not forgive her. Then, remembering how, in the days that were gone by, he had always been ready and anxious to stretch out a helping hand to those who had injured him, how cheerfully he had ignored their offences, how readily forgiven them, she marvelled that to her, out of all the world, he should be hard, and the tears fell fast down her cheeks.

“What are you crying about?” asked her sister, briskly.

“I’m not crying,” said Ethel, checking her tears, “only—only—”

“Only you expected the Vicar to come and see how you were—I know what that dress means—and ask you to marry him all over again. Well, my dear, I’m sorry for you, but he won’t do it; and you can’t expect it.”

Ethel made no reply; the precious words spoken by Mr. Manley had not passed her lips. She sighed, believing now that her sister’s words were true—that he would not come, he would not forgive. Her pain was almost too great. She sat at her window, watching the moonlight, as, unknown to her, the Vicar was doing also, and cried as if her heart would break. But on the morrow, at ten o’clock, a note was brought her. It was very short, and there was neither formal beginning nor ending. “I hope to be with you at twelve o’clock to-day.”

Her breath came in gasps; she sat down, a great joy in her eyes.

“What’s that about?” asked Miss Hatton, who was in the dining-room with her sister. Ethel gave her the note.

“The Vicar coming at twelve to see you! All I can say is that it is extremely kind of him.”

And then, her mind not having recovered its just balance, Ethel confided to her sister the words that he had spoken when she had fainted.

Miss Hatton looked thoughtful for a moment, then spoke briskly, “Go up-stairs at once, Ethel, and make yourself look as nice as you possibly can.”

And then a consultation as to dress arose. Ethel possessed a very pretty and most becoming white morning-dress, very suitable for this warm, delicious day; but, as she justly alleged, were she to put it on it would look as if she were an expectant bride, or something of that sort.

Her sister saw the force of her objection.

"You have that pretty white-and-blue cotton; you look as well in that as in anything; go and put it on at once; it fits you beautifully, and is a really well-made dress."

"But, oh, Gertrude," said Ethel, pausing at the door, "suppose we are building our hopes on nothing; suppose he shouldn't care about me now!"

"Go and make yourself nice," returned Miss Hatton, not deigning to notice the last sentence. "If you *look* pretty, half—no, three fourths—no, nine tenths of the battle is gained."

But Ethel knew that nine tenths of the battle would not be gained with the Vicar.

"I will tell you what I will do," said her sister. "I will make the drawing-room look as nice as I possibly can, and then I will take mother out for a walk. Father is out, and will not be home to lunch."

The drawing-room chintz was rather faded; the carpet somewhat worn; the furniture, though solid, old-fashioned. But Miss Hatton so skilfully adorned the room with flowers that they became the only noticeable feature. Flowers were everywhere—on the mantelpiece, the tables, the brackets, and a huge bowl of roses brightened the hall. The windows opened on to the garden; the fresh, soft morning breeze entered; the trees on the lawn looked cool and green.

"I think it looks very well," said Miss Hatton, pausing at the door before going up to get ready.

But to sit in the drawing-room awaiting the Vicar was more than Ethel could do. She remained in her bedroom.

"Let me look at you before I go," said her sister, scrutinizing her earnestly. "You are a little too pale, but you are very pretty."

As the clock struck twelve the Vicar knocked at the door. Ethel had heard his step up the gravel path, but she was afraid to go down until summoned. Her heart beat as she opened the door, and saw him standing at the end of the long room; but he had not heard her quiet footsteps; he was looking out of the window.

Suddenly he turned, and saw her standing there, afraid to approach, afraid to attract his attention; and in that moment he could not but remember how, in the former time, it had been her wont to run to him and throw her arms round his neck.

"How do you do?" he said, quietly, and smiled. His cheeks were still hollow, but his smile had now regained its old brightness. "I hope you are none the worse for your accident."

"No," she answered, remaining standing; neither did she ask him to sit down.

He turned his head, and again looked out of the window.

"How well your garden is looking," he said, cheerfully.

She made no reply. He looked at her, and saw that her bosom was heaving, and that her face was very white. He knew it would be cruel to keep her longer in suspense.

"Ethel," he said, quietly, "I have come to ask you again to be my wife;" and he took her lifeless, cold hand in his.

A startled look came into her eyes; he had not asked her thus before, with this quiet friendliness; *then* his cheek had glowed, his eyes had sparkled.

"Do you love me?" she asked, piteously.

"I do love you."

In a moment she had sunk down on her knees at his feet.

"I am not worthy to be your wife," she said, brokenly. "Forgive me, Phil, for all that has taken place; oh, forgive me."

"I do forgive you," he answered, calmly. "You must not kneel to me."

"But I must," she answered, wildly; "for I am not worthy to be your wife. But, if you will have me, I will try to atone to you, Phil. My whole life shall be one long atonement. I cannot express to you what I feel; how I should like, now, to put my head on the ground, when I think of all that is past, that you might put your foot upon it."

He raised her forcibly.

"I want a wife who will *love* me," he said, gravely. "I do not desire a wife whose remorse is such that her life, as you express it, will be 'one long atonement.' If that is to be so, I will not marry you. I wish you to *love* me."

She stood facing him; then her face lit up.

"Love you?" she said, feelingly; "I love you, Phil, with all my heart. I know that my love has not been one that has endured all things, has hoped all things, has believed all things. But it shall be so in future; it shall, indeed. I feel very humble before you, Phil—"

"Not so," he interposed; "you must not, indeed."

"But, although I have erred, I have suffered; I have suffered keenly, Phil. Do you think I did not suffer when I parted from you? Do you think I did not suffer through all that weary time when I was divided from you — when I mourned my wrong judgment of you, when I repented from my soul? Do you think I did not suffer when I knew that you were wandering amid foreign lands, enduring every hardship, for Christ's sake? But, most of all, have I not suffered since your return, when the knowledge of all I lost cut me to the heart? Have I not suffered in seeing your averted glances, in hearing your coldly-polite words? In the former time I experienced that jealousy which was cruel as the grave; but I will never experience it again, Phil; I will not, indeed. For I know now that Love is stronger than Death. I love you, Phil; I love you."

As she stood before him the golden sunlight gave a glory to her hair, to her lovely eyes. Her face, perfect as to feature, lovely as to expression, spoke to him even more loudly than her words. His faith in her came back, his love was restored. He knew that she

spoke the truth—that her love would never fail again, that her faith in him would never waver, that he should have a wife in heart and soul and mind and truth. No longer did he need the forgiveness of the Christian man and the clergyman, no longer did he require to school himself. Joy and gladness and happiness had returned—never, so far as his love was concerned, to leave him.

Once again his cheek glowed, his eyes shone. He held out his arms, saying, “Come to me, my well-beloved,” and folded her to his heart.

And, as she remained in his embrace, she said, softly,

“‘I will grow round him in his place,
Grow, live, die looking on his face—
Die, dying clasped in his embrace.’”

THE END.

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
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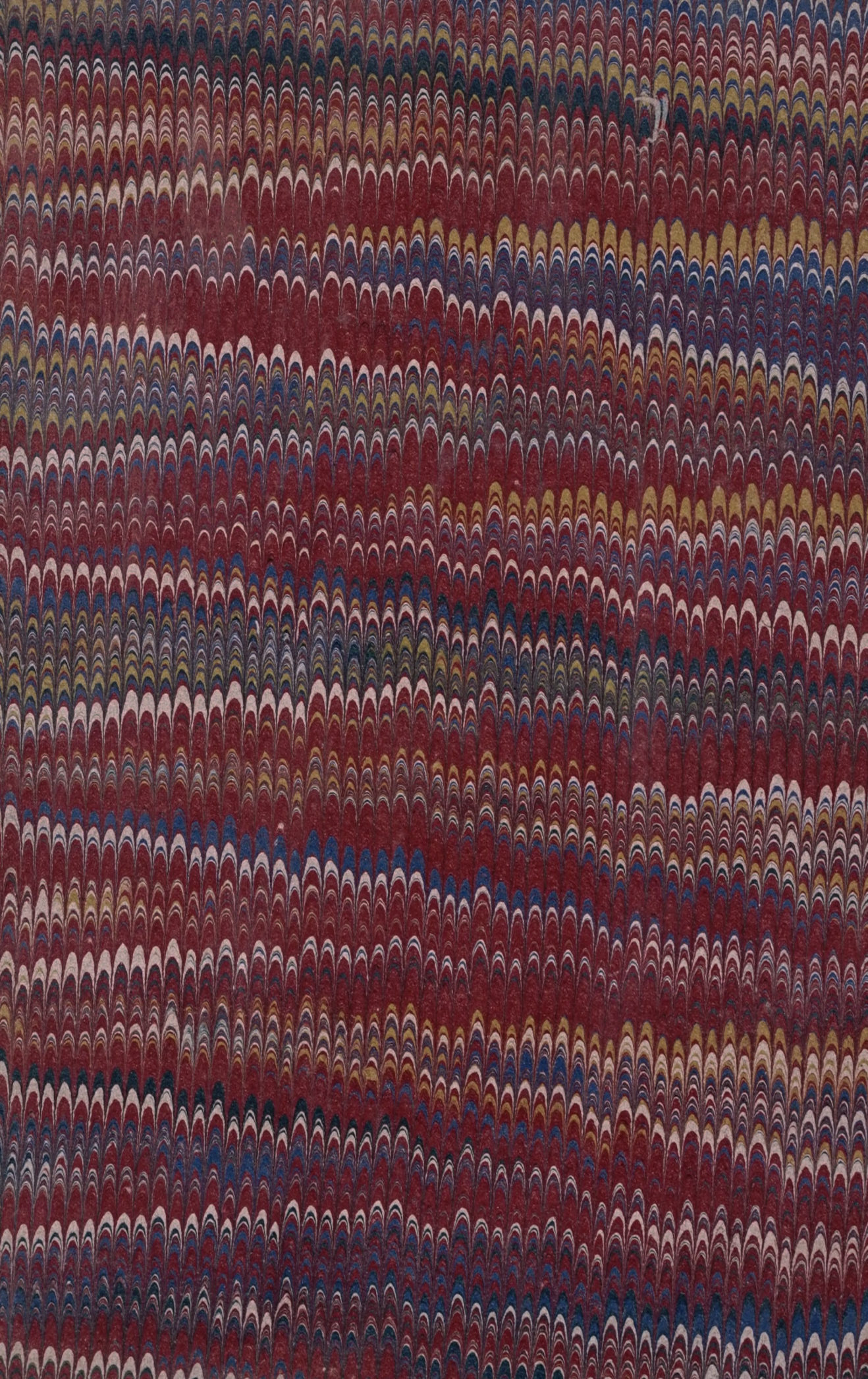
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